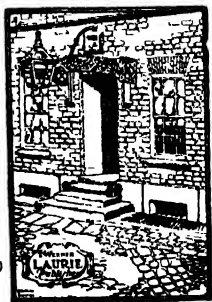


THE WORKS OF

ARTHUR M. BINSTED

(VOLUME II)



Order this book at once

from your library

or bookseller and you will not be disappointed. The large public interested in the Turf, the Theatre, Clubland, Fleet St., and the Bar, will revel in this piquant and witty book of intimate reminiscences of the "roaring 'nineties." It is a mine of humour packed with delightful anecdotes.

"MASTER" AND MEN

Pink 'Un Yesterdays

By J. B. BOOTH ("Costs")

Fully Illustrated, 21/- net

T. WERNER LAURIE Ltd.

VOLUME II

THE WORKS OF
ARTHUR M. BINSTEAD

("THE PITCHER")

HOUNDSDITCH DAY BY DAY
GAL'S GOSSIP
MORE GAL'S GOSSIP
MOP FAIR

LONDON

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD.

COBHAM HOUSE, 24 AND 26 WATER LANE, E.C.4

MCMXXII

BINSTEAD'S WORKS

VOLUME I

Contains :

**A Pink 'Un and a Pelican
Pitcher in Paradise**

HOUNDSDITCH DAY BY DAY

“ If a man is fined a fiver for cutting dogs’ ears, what price the Chief Rabbi? ”—*Sporting Times*, 2nd Feb., 1895

FOREWORDS

IT occurs to me that the Child of Israel who reads these pages may perchance take offence where none is meant. To provide against this harrowing possibility, I hasten to avow that my stories are no vulgar satires, conceived in a spirit of Christian intolerance, on a people whose commercial shrewdnesses and yard-wide thrift have always enabled them to get the better of their Gentile competitors, and who, rightly or wrongly, believe themselves to be the salt of the earth. Being neither Christian nor Jew, I am inspired neither by love nor hatred; as for the purity of my literary style—should *that* at times put my subjects in too strong a light—why, I learnt it, as my old friend, John Hollingshead, said to William Makepeace Thackeray, mostly from costermongers and skittle-sharps.

A. M. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE REASONING OF RACHEL ROSENBAUM	13
IKE FISCHER'S IRON BEDSTEAD	22
A SOLO HAND THAT DID NOT FAIL	28
A DIGRESSION	35
A STABLE BOY FROM THE GHETTO	40
MR BENRIMO'S PASACH LETTER	44
A JEWELLER OF THE HALLS	54
HYAMSON'S MOURNERS	63
BEN BARNETT'S METHODS	66
THE GENTS OF THE GARRISON	73
A BULK THAT FAILED	79
MR BENRIMO'S SHEVUOTH LETTER	87
EIGHT TO ONE—BAR ONE	96
JOE JOEL'S DINING-TABLE	102
"O FOR OCTOBER"	107
THE DEMOLITION OF DOOK'S PLACE	116
MR BENRIMO'S SUCCOTH LETTER	121
THE TRAGIC END OF GOODIE TWO-SHOES	133
A PURELY SPORTING BIT	145
CASH TAILORING	150
MR BENRIMO'S ROSH HOSHONAH LETTER	159
THE FALLING BACK OF MOSES HERMANN	174
PELUG THE UNRIGHTEOUS	185
PONTIUS THE WHITE MAN	189
MUD SPOTS	196

HOUNDSDITCH DAY BY DAY

THE REASONING OF RACHEL ROSENBAUM

IT is not a good thing for a Jewess to mate with a Gentile, or *vice versa*. But the blood of youth is hot, and Registrars' offices, where the fatal knot can be satisfactorily adjusted in about fifteen minutes, and at a total cash cost of about nine-and-sixpence, simply bristle all over the Metropolis. It is not in the nature of youth to pause and think of after probabilities. The non-Yiddish swain, whose heart beats faster when his hot right paw squeezes the ungloved digits of the half-alien maiden, sitting on the chair beside him, as he seeks to inspire her with a confidence—of which she is really not in need—in order to give clear and distinct replies to the Registrar's interrogatories, does not realise at the moment that he is voluntarily pitch-forking himself into a congregation of born swappers, who would rather trade than eat. Nor does the trusting Hebrew

maiden, who, by her own act, is rashly and deliberately bringing upon herself unpopularity with the whole of her people, ever dream that the man for whom she is taking all risks, as the pantechnicon people say, can in after years grow so callous as to chuck a Britannia-metal coffee-pot at her head, simply because she expresses conscientious religious scruples, when the larder is empty, against joining him in an application for the Dunmow Flitch.

They never think of these things. And should children bless their union—a fairly good thing to take a hundred to fifteen about, as a rule—what unexpected unhappiness do they often bring! To one side of the house more than the other the child must surely incline, for children have yet to acquire and cultivate the art of resembling each parent in turn, on alternate evenings, by request. Children are strong and uncompromising partisans. See, emerging from yonder pastry-cook's shop a huge Semitic nose, with a small boy in a purple plush "Fauntleroy" suit behind it. His name is Master Montague Solomon Isaacstein. His father was "one of us," but his mother was a Goyisher woman; and he lives with his parents in Tavistock Square. He has sixpennyworth of cream pastry in that paper bag, and there is a

tanner in the starboard sky of his tight little trowsys. Are his parents of the sort that spoil children by showering silver upon them? Not by a jugful! On the contrary, they cut him rather short—an ancient Abrahamic idea. Then whence come the tarts and the tanner in the trowsys? Reader, he has been to have three milk-teeth drawn this morning—three of 'em at a bob a tooth—and his mother, fearful lest the forceps should hurt her darling, gave him four roberto sterling, so that he might have an anæsthetic. He has had the molars out all right enough, but he has buzzed her on the laughing gas. The boy will get on; but his lady mother's eyes are wet as she watches him from the window and she dreads the hour when he will come indoors and unload on her a really clever bit of fiction about the application of the nitrous oxide.

It is not a good thing, as I said before, for a Jewess to flop her young affections on a Gentile, but, despite this great and rock-based truth, little Rachel Rosenbaum was literally over head and ears in love with one Dick Diggins, and all the laws contained in the Book of Leviticus wouldn't have altered it. Richard was equally gone on Rachel, and it would have been perfectly useless for the whole flock of the Rabbins to cry with a

great histrionic moralist, "Hands orf our women: don't pull the goods about," because whenever Richard set his heart on anything he invariably helped himself to it.

Dick Diggins was "one of the boys," and feared nothing in the world but Bob Moody. You couldn't have paid a man money enough to have taken the job to keep Richard straight. Still, he had a good heart, though bad breath, and his affection for the sallow little daughter of Judah was his long suit. Had he had money as a regular thing, gold would not have been too precious for the mistress of his heart to eat: as it was, lump sums only came his way occasionally, wherefore Rachel did most of her feeding with her people.

Now when Pasach, which is the Hebrew Passover, came along, it entered the head of Rachel to explain that there were many more things in the old-time abstention from leaven than were not dreamt of even in her own Richard Diggins' philosophy. Jewish maidens, she said, looked forward to this "yontov," not so much on account of the dietary change from birdseed-sprinkled loaves to dry, unleavened, cardboardy "motsa's," nor to the fleeting joys of "Kosher" rum, shrub, or cordials; but because it was the season when it

became the proper caper for the man who wooed a Yiddisher maid to seize her forcibly, and bear her off despite her struggles, if any, to the bazaar keepers of Bevis Marks, or the haggling Herodians of Houndsditch, and there to buy her a present of silver, or gold, or even precious stones. As Richard listened to these things, his right hand, inserted in the corresponding pocket of his thirteen-shilling Kino's, toyed idly with the sum of one-and-sevenpence, though his mobile face displayed no symptom of inward uneasiness. Then, the while his concealed hand caught hold of his single shilling, around the milled edge of which he ran his thumb-nail in a self-congratulatory way that cannot be practised with the other coin of similar size—the humble, brown halfpenny—he asked whether she had seen anything in particular that took her fancy for a Pasach gift. Rachel, a little bit abashed by his magnanimity, replied in the affirmative. She had seen a perfect little gem of a gold watch, with an enamelled back, picturing several little cupids chasing each other round a number of statuary bases—just as Rubens might have limned a canvas with “I-spy-Charlie-Skinner-in-the-doorway !” given him for a subject—and it was to be seen at a Hebrew jeweller's in Leman Street.

Thither the young couple proceeded, Rachel with a heart beating high with joyous expectation : Richard with the hazy hopefulness, born of long vagabondage, that *some* way out of the difficulty would be sure to present itself to him in the fulness of time.

And what a glorious, philosophical trait that is to find in a man's composition ! The human atom who has trained himself to accept without hostile demonstration any earthly situation that may present itself, has half conquered the world. He can try and achieve his point afterwards.

Once upon a time the most affectionate, well-meaning fellow in the whole world was deeply smitten by a maiden, and she, bless her ! was about as big a fool as twenty dozen of David Copperfield's Dora's rolled into one. She had high-flown and nonsensical ambitions about him, and catching him one day sitting moodily looking into the fire, she crept up, put her little hand on his shoulder, and asked, as she nestled up to him :—

“Was my boy thinking how he could please his own little Kitten ?”

Of course he wasn't, but he said he was.

“Well, then,” she simpered, “she'd like to see her dear boy's name in the newspapers, as having achieved something.”

For several months he did not refer to the matter again, but when at last he did, it was by reminding her abruptly, just as he was taking his leave of her for the night, of her wish.

"Oh yes," she said, "and is it in?"

"It is," said he, thrusting the special edition of *The Standard*, folded up, into her dimpled hands. "Page six. Bottom of last column."

And in the seclusion of her own room, with the gas turned high, she read his name, printed in full, and followed by the mystic legend:

"First Meeting of Creditors—11.30."

But to come back to Leman Street.

The gold watch hung, with several others, from a metal rod suspended across the jeweller's shop window, and Rachel had by no means overstated its beauty. Its enamelling was most tasteful, and the judicious way in which the cupids' lack of clothing was made up for by floating ends of ribbon, or projecting twigs of trees, would have merited the approval of the most exacting puritan on the Entertainments Committee of the L.C.C.

But the ticket affixed to the watch announced its price to be £8, and as Diggins' eye caught on to the fact, his lips gave a long, low, significant whistle. Eight pounds are a Chinese Loan to a man between whom and the workhouse only

IKE FISCHER'S IRON BEDSTEAD

DID the fact come under your honour's observation that there were no lobsters at Windsor Races last Friday?

I do not employ the word "lobster" in its slang sense as applying to our dauntless, red-coated household cavalry, nor do I speak as regards the fishmongers' shops in the streets of the Royal Borough itself; but were you sufficiently heedful of your surroundings on the course, the while you blew in your brass on slow race-horses, to miss the familiar and oft-repeated inquiry:

"Does any sportsman say another champion? Ere, who'll 'ave a nobby lobster, a bob?"

Dynasties have dynastied, flickered, and died for the want of a guiding hand; empires have tottered and fallen on the withdrawal of a tiny prop; but the reason why there were no red-shelled crustaceans at Windsor last Friday to appease the cravings of the jaded sportsman on the race-course, or amuse him on the long and tedious

train-ride home, was a very simple one—Ike Fischer hadn't got his "stock money."

It was through no recklessness or extravagance that he was in this shlemozzle ; simply Isaac was not a top-weight of finance. There are many others. In particular do I remember a crotchety old widower of thirty years ago who lived in Great Tichfield Street. His investments brought him in exactly three hundred and sixty-five pounds a year, which, by some abstruse and profound method of reckoning, he made out to be precisely one pound per day. There was so much daily, for proportion of rent, so much for wear and tear of clothes, so much for the savings' bank, and so much for the burial club. Once every four years, when there came round an extra day with no income, he used to sit and mope and suck an acid drop. Ike Fischer was a financier of this depressing stripe.

As he stood in the doorway of his little house in Wentworth Street and watched the other schemers of the district going forth to earn their daily fish and cucumber by the sweat of their jaws Ike Fischer felt as hungry as a hyena with tapeworm and as insignificant as a snide chromo on the walls of the Vatican.

A day of idleness and desuetude was before

him, and that, to a well-regulated Yid, was intolerable.

Upstairs, Old Man Fischer lay dreaming of fresh combinations at solo on a nearly new black and brass French bedstead. The morning sunshine poured in upon his merry old face, and he started involuntarily in his sleep as he saw his partner about to come hearts instead of keeping on with "shuppa" for him to trump. It seemed a close shave to a shame to wake him, so, grabbing the mattresses and giving them a sharp tug, Ike landed them and their still sleeping burden in the middle of the floor, with no greater discomfiture to his slumbering parent than to jerk out of him the muttered remark: "Ach! save the slam, Mossy, save the slam!" Then he dozed off, heavier with sleep than ever.

Wentworth Street and its patient, struggling inhabitants are alike incapable of the capacity for surprise, so that the spectacle of the nearly new black-and-brass French bedstead fixed up temporarily in the gutter and adorned by a hastily-scrawled ticket, "For Sale, Cheap," and the carcass of Isaac Fischer sitting astride its laths, aroused no unusual curiosity.

It was just then that Mo Simmons, who was to "sit for joy" on the coming Sunday with the

belle of Brushfield Street, came along, and Isaac Fischer's pulses quickened. For Mo would be wanting a bedstead, and here was the thing that would suit him to a dot! Mo was thinking of the same thing, too, but not to show his hand too soon, he came and sat down on the starboard lath, and talked of many things, from the nearing of Rosh Hoshonah to the iniquitous rise in the price of frying-oil. But by-and-by he came round, by very easy stages—Klondyke and the Yukon River—to the price of bedsteads, and second-hand black-and-brass French bedsteads in particular. On the instant that he mentioned that, Isaac arose and rolled off his tongue with terrible and well-nigh convincing earnestness—

“One o’ the ’andsomest an’ soundest as ever come out o’ Birmingham, may I die! Double-lacquered top-rails and knobs, ball-casters, not a lath missin’, an’ patent adjustable screw buttons—so help me, Mo, a third o’ what it cost three months ago—fourteen deena!”

“Ach!” cried Mo, with a petulant expression of the keenest sarcasm; “’an ’ow mightn’t I wheel it up ’an down on a barrer outside the Mansion ’Ouse, ’an tell the Lord Mayor what I’d paid for it!”

Shrugging his shoulders, and seemingly amused

at Fischer's extravagant demand, Mo Simmons went away round the corner, and was absent for about an hour. When at length he returned, and Ike's eyes, looking up, met his, he affected to be staggered with surprise to see the bedstead still there.

"D'ye mean to say as you've 'ad no buyers?" cried he sarcastically. "What's come to 'em—mershugga?"

"Mershugga or not," replied Ike, with simulated carelessness, "the bedstead's a dozen shillins', no less."

"I should want one an' a half o' one for it," sneered Simmons, and again he steered off. By the time the mid-day influx of potato-porters from Spitalfields Market marked the day half gone, Simmons and Isaacs had had six encounters, Mo's offer being by now advanced to eight-and-sixpence, and Isaac's reserve lowered to an even half-couter. But they had sworn at one another, and that was a bad sign; so when the regulation thirty minutes went by, and Simmons failed to re-appear, Fischer in disgust lugged out the iron stretcher, took the bedstead down, and carried it into the dark passage of the house again. Now that the afternoon had begun, they would be playing clobbyoss at the club, and there were

more than one or two of his co-religionists who would start him at that with a few shillings.

As he stepped out into the street again, who should come round the corner but Simmons! For an instant Fischer regretted that he had "shut up shop," but his pride soon gained the mastery.

"'Ave yer sold it?" cried Simmons, somewhat anxiously.

"No."

"Say nine bob then—firm?"

Ike Fischer gazed upon the haggling Simmons with a look of ineffable scorn. He had wasted his morning, and he felt bitterly.

"No," said he, with conscious superiority, "no, ye miserable momzir-bedniddah; d'ye know what we done?"

"No. What?"

"Rather than take sich a offer as yours for the article we—we—*chopped it up into firewood!*"

A SOLO HAND THAT DID NOT FAIL

IT was ten o'clock on a Saturday night, and the ponderous doors of the Whitechapel High Street branch of the London and National Joint-Stock County Bank had been closed for several hours. And in a handsomely-furnished room on the first floor, Dick Chennell, the sub-manager, waited impatiently for his principal. Dick had only been in the proud position of "sub." for three short weeks, and he inwardly confessed to himself that he didn't like it—indeed, he'd have surrendered it then and there, lock, stock, and overdrafts—aye, and stood a supper at the Woolpack into the bargain—to a qualified successor approved by the bank, that he might go back to the paying-counter in Lombard Street. It wasn't that he couldn't hit it with his chief, but he had a natural antipathy to Hebrews; and, I take it, the fact is too well known to need repetition, that the great reason for the Whitechapel branch of the London and

National Joint-Stock County Bank doing the roaring business that it undoubtedly does in Judea is, that it has always had a Hebrew of the Hebrews—a lineal descendant of an original ark-bearer, when procurable, for a resident manager. Richard had always been accustomed to the gilt-edged method of banking, and the customers, *blasé* of boodle, who took it “short,” and with gloved hands, and it pained his sensitive nature to come amongst the unwashed horde, who always drew it “red,” and tried it, piece by piece, between their teeth.

As he sat there fretting, all in vain; a ring came at the side bell, and a minute or so later a maid-servant rapped on the door with her knuckles, and asked :

“If you please, sir, do you know what time Mr Aaronson will be back?”

(Mr Aaronson was the manager—the Hebrew of Hebrews).

“No, I don’t, Susan. Who is it—anybody of importance?”

“It’s a gentleman who looks like a Jew, sir.”

“An awkward predicament for the gentleman,” muttered Richard; “but I s’pose it’s on the business of the bank. I’ll come down, Susan.”

And he went down.

Susan's description of the gentleman was perfectly correct. He was a fat, healthy, cheerful Jew, and abnormally excited.

"Ye don't know vhat time Mr Aaronson returnth, do ye, thir?"

"No, he's very uncertain," replied Chennell. "Is it on a private matter, or on the business of the bank that you wish to see him?"

"Oh, a matter o' bithineth," responded the other, "I've an account 'ere. Motheth Henthka Larzaruth. You know the name?"

"Oh, yes! But—er—let me see. Your account's overdrawn, I think?"

"Yeth, yeth, jutht for a day or tho; an' that bringth uth to the point. I vant to overdraw another terventy bounds."

"My dear sir, without expressing an opinion as to whether or no Mr Aaronson will consent to that, you must come in business hours. We re-open on Monday at ten."

"Accha Nebbitch, vhath the good o' that? I vant terventy bounds *now*—vithin three-kervarters of an hour!"

"Then I fear you will be disappointed, sir—at least so far as this bank is concerned."

"Look 'ere—I'm a very old cuthtomer, Mithter —er—Mithter ——"

"Chennell," put in Dick.

"Ah, yeth — 'ow forgetful of me — Mithter Chennell, of courth, of courth—I'm a very old cuthtomer, an' thith ith very—*very*—urgent : *vill* yer oblige me ?"

"I oblige you, sir? Oh, no, I couldn't do that. To start with, I don't know you——"

"I'm a very old cuthtomer 'ere, sir--a *fearful* old cuthtomer—vhy, it vath my grandfather, retht hith thoul !—Mithter—er—Chennell, vhat owned the bit o' ground that thith bank vath *built* on—and here I'm—I'm comin' near to be *ruined*, Mithter Chennell, an' all for a paltry terventy bounds."

"I'm sorry for you. What is it, an execution in your house ?"

"Shemor beni ! I 'ope not—all de money ve owe in de vorld is a few deena for Becky's mickvah's, an' ve Yidden don't execute vun another, Mithter Chennell—no, but it's more seriouth even than an execution. Can't ye do it for me ; Mithter Aaronson vould in a minute."

"I can't. Besides, I don't know the nature of your trouble, even. A few pounds out of my own pocket, if any one was ill——"

"Ach ! Gort forbid ! They're all gone—long may they live, tho' I muthn't beshroy 'em—on

the top o' the buth to Barnum'th—if dey vath 'ere I might thet 'em to verk to get me out of thith trouble. *O'ny* terventy bounds, Mithter Chennell, *o'ny* terventy bounds—thay yeth?"

"Tell me what this great trouble is," persisted Chennell, getting somewhat interested.

"I don't t'ink you'd underthtand it, Mithter Chennell."

"I can't say until I've heard. Anyhow, *if* I understand it, and it is as great as you make out, I'll lend you the money myself."

"*Vill* yer, Mithter Chennell, *vill* yer?" crowed the Jew, taking the sub-manager's hands in his, and advancing into the passage. "Then I'll tell yer. Ve vhas a playin' Solo Vhist, me an' Horvitzburg, an' Greenboam, an' Vurt'eimer. Ve vhos playin' two, four, thix poundt—two for a tholo, four for a mithere, an' thix abundanthe. Ve're bin' playin' thinth theven, an' all my ready moneyth gone, vhen—all of a thudden—vhat dy'e t'ink I get? Ace, king, kveen to thix timeth trump, ace an' king o' clubth, an' ace o' diamondth. I goeth 'abundanth'—I'm *bound* to go it. My pore father—retht hith thoul!—ud turn in hith grave at Villethden if I *didn't* go it—an' Greenboam commenteth to rap on the table with hith knuckleth, an' thays: 'Ooftish,

Larzaruth, ooftish '—meanin' 'put up the money to pay uth vith in case you're beat; show uth you ain't callin' on the off chance.' Vell, ath I tell yer, all me ready-moneyth gone—vhat can I do? 'Owever, by beggin' an' entreatin', I gets 'em to conthent to thith arrangement; each vun to put hith cardth in a envelope, an' theal 'em up, givin' me vun hour to go out an' raise the money—ven I returnth, the envelopth to be opened an' the 'andth played. *Now*, Mithter Chennell, you thee vhat a dethperate pothition I'm in——"

"You're a damned impostor, sir," cried Chennell, who was very angry at having his sympathies awakened upon such a pretence, "get out!"

He grabbed the wanderer from the Ghetto by the shoulders, and forced him down the steps, the Jew all the time begging piteously to be lent the money. A crowd began to gather round, and happily, just in the height of the pow-wow, Mr Aaronson drove up in a cab.

Three minutes later, Moses Henshka Lazarus went on his way rejoicing, with four clean, crisp fivers in his pocket, and Mr Aaronson, turning to the discomfited Chennell, said in a tired and petulant tone :

“ Really, Mr Chennell, I think you had better get the head office to transfer you to some other branch—say to some old-fashioned district like Shepherd’s Bush or Twickenham, or so. You’ll never do at Whitechapel—unless you can bring yourself to understand that ace, king, queen to six times trump, with ace and king and a third ace, is ample security for twenty—aye, up to a hundred pounds! Good evening.”

A DIGRESSION

SPEAKING of bankers' methods, leads me temporarily astray from the Semitic scenario which I had intended sticking to, in order to relate another banking story—a North London, not an Egyptian (or Pharaoh) banking story, as the Hebrew reader might naturally expect. Going up into the s'loon bar of the Grand Theatre at Islington to moisten earth's clay, on a certain evening of two years ago, what time the hunky and altogether beautiful Ada Rehan had gone to her dressing-room to change her tights, the first thing that struck me was the absence from the walls of the fine old collection of theatrical photographs, sketches, posters, and Bryanian portraits, over the getting together of which, and the labelling, the indexing, the framing, and arranging, the defunct Charles Wilmot had spent an appreciable portion of his busy life. No longer did Lady Bancroft, in the trunks of *Perdita*, exhibit the shapeliness

of her youth, nor Mr Wyndham show how he used to move the ingenuous of a quarter of a century ago to mirth by the subtle device of dipping a quill in an ink-pot and daubing his face with it. The several pictures of himself as Mawworm, with which the justly proud Wilmot punctuated the other rubbish, were no longer to be seen, and the equally numerous "studies" of "old Joe" Holt,—once pardner in the Duke's, if I mistake not—in his bloodthirsty Shakespearian creations, were gone for ever. Belle Bilton, who, in portraiture, used to sit just inside the door, cuddling a black silk knee that stuck rebelliously out of about a blind tatting school's annual output of embroidery, had moseyed also, and Wilson Barrett, with his kinky, petroleum shampoo curls, had vamosed, probably in search of a fresh bit of blue ribbon to stick in his hair.

I had accustomed myself to inspect these old pictures whenever I went in for three-bobsworth of draughty drama at the Grand—for I never go in on the nod—and I felt kinder disappointed at not finding them.

Had Darmstatter, the last bold, intrepid licensed victualler who had tried to whack-up an enthusiastic drinking connection around this

dramatic annexe, and who, while doing so, had basely rung in a subscription picture of himself as the Bleeding Officer, or something, between the classic features of the Philosopher Redfern, and the Chevalier Scovel, taken them with him, or what had become of them?

Along at the far end of the bar, a small, stout man, the sort that a cannibal islander would have selected from his poulterer's shop-board for the sake of the promise of good picking, was earnestly endeavouring to consume one of the sandwiches peculiar to the bars of suburban theatres, where it is often necessary to sustain life during the progress of a triple bill, and, with a view to enlightenment, I said :

"If you will pardon a complete stranger passing the remark, sir, to one whom he assumes to be a native, the merriment of Islington should be sensibly diminished since she has lost her theatrical art-treasures" — and I indicated the bare walls.

"If you mean the picturs," he said stolidly, removing from his teeth, with a pin taken from his scarf, a morsel of the arterial system of the hog that had furnished the *motif*, if I may use the term, of the sandwich. "If you mean the picturs, w'y, 'Arry Randall's bought 'em."

"Indeed," said I, "and deprived the Islingtonians of their most cherished mementoes?"

"I dunno about *that*," the stout man protested mildly; "most of 'em's got enough 'mementoes' of one sort an' another to go round; d'ye know this part at all?"

"Intimately," said I.

"Ah! P'raps ye know Bill Lingham, as used to make a little book just round the City Road beyond Colebrooke Row?"

I answered that I had not enjoyed that honour.

"Oh!" said my friend, "well, *he* left one or two hundred 'mementoes' about this part after Telescope got 'ome last back-end. If you 'adder known him you might have had one, but p'raps this'll interest you."

From his breeches pocket he drew a fat leathern purse, and from the northernmost pocket of it a cheque that had been almost worn into four pieces by being opened and re-folded. It was drawn on a local bank in favour of "W. H. Thornyacre, Esq.," for forty-six pounds sterling, signed "W. Lingham," and marked in the left-hand bottom corner, "N.E."

"There's one of Islington's mementoes," cried Mr Thornyacre, with fine sarcasm, "an', so 'elp me good garden stuff, the bank cashier he

summed it all up like a Mother Shipton when he put them two letters on it down there in the corner!"

"I don't understand bank markings," said I.

"No more didn't I afore I presented that cheque," responded Thornyacre. "I shoved it acrost the counter, an' the clerk he smiled as he piped it off, wrote 'N.E.' in the corner of it, an' shoved it back! I says: 'You'll excuse me, but whotteryer put these letters on it for; whadder they mean?' 'What, don't ye know?' says he. 'No,' says I. Then he leans acrost the counter, and, puttin' one hand to his mouth, says in a sort of hoarse groan, 'N.E.—No Earthly!'—and, lord lummy! he was right, for the blighter 'ad drawed his balance on the previous Saturday, settled all his furniture on his wife, and booked two passages on the steamer for Honolulu!"

A STABLE BOY FROM THE GHETTO

IT was only a poor illiterate letter from a stable-boy recruited from the Ghetto, but the poor illiterate Yiddisher stable-boy's elder brother, to whom it was addressed, had waited for it for many days, and now that it had at last arrived he read and re-read it in an earnest affectionate way that was positively beautiful to gaze upon. True, he was only a gentleman's servant, acting in the dual capacity of valet and writer-guard to Captain Walsingham Getta-Bytte, of Ryder Street, St James'; but a tender and responsive heart beat beneath the uppers of his overalls—(It is well known that Reicheimer's, of Conduit Street, are wonderfully liberal in cutting servants' liveries. The narrator merely mentions this fact lest the reader, who in the course of his own life may have noticed thousands of Nature's anatomical errors, should conclude that the valet's inner, or Latin, arrangements were misplaced)—and salt tears of affection and delight welled up into his

eyes as they wandered over his kinsman's epistle.

It ran :—

MY DEA BROTHER,—This coms hopg it fins you well as, T.G., it leavs all hre. Tell uncle Robet I will rite tmorrow, Wedesday mornng, to thnk him for ruber shoes received ; they fit beautifuly, not to long nr wide. recomend Willam a pair. Poor uncle Hery ! What a blo it must hve been when they tel him no more outdoor relief ! Must go in the worhouse ; beter di miseraby in the street. Wel, it's the way the treat Waterlo heroes who throgh povety goes hobling to the grave in a pauper's shel ! Por uncle ! As the breafast bll has jus started I must now cnclude, hopin Rachl is geting well and Benjmin's polyus is cured, with affectionte regads and respectful wishes to al friends.—Your Brother, MOSES.

With delight sparkling in his liquid eyes the Yiddisher valet carefully folded the letter in its old creases, and two minutes later aroused his master, holding in his right hand, as a sort of truce after intruding upon the sleeper's siesta, a silver salver, on which were a sensible sized tumbler, containing a double dose of old brown brandy and a bottle of Schweppe. The latter having been opened into the former, and the Captain having placed both in a state of effervescence on the road to the spot where they were calculated to effect most good, wiped his now streaming eyes upon the satin bed-coverlet, and asked :

"Any news from your brother, Isaac?"

"Yessir," said the valet, and laid the letter on the bed. The noble captain was a bit chippy; he had been up best part of the night initiating a monied youngster into the mysteries of *écarté*, and he could hardly have translated—for it's time to own up that the missive was one to be read between the lines—the stable-boy's letter without assistance. As it was, he said:

"Take a sheet of paper and a pen, Isaac."

The valet seated himself at a toy writing-table and did as he was bid. Then reading the letter, the Captain called:

"R."

"R," repeated the servant.

"E—in—d—e—e—r. That's Reindeer. Gad! Fancy that thing being their best!"

The Captain seemed astonished; but presently went on spelling again. At last, with an impatient little grunt, he came to the end of the message.

"What do you make of it, Ike?" he asked, and Isaac, reading from the half sheet of notepaper on which he had intelligently constructed the letters as his master called them out, the modern Peter (who to all tradesmen denied his master) called:

"Reindeer won in a bloomin' walk. Tell your bloke to get a 'parcel.'"

That's all. It mayn't be a skilfully constructed story, but it goes to show how a poor illiterate stable-boy, who has never had the benefits of a School Board education, but been brought up by the imperfect methods of Judea, can correspond by a simple code consisting in merely leaving letters out of words ; also why the somewhat sharp owner of Reindeer, after keeping that animal for the Stewards' Cup for two years, had, at the finish, to take 100 to 9 to his money.

AT PASACH

*An Epistle addressed by Mr Moses Benrimo, of
Bevis Marks, to his nephew in Johannis-
burg, on the Eve of the Passover.*

MY TEAR CHUDAH,

Ve vhas very glad, your Aunt Beckie an' me, to get your letter a-sayin' as how you'd choined the Sons of Plotzkar. Mozzel, my poy, mozzel. I vunce pelonged to the Sons of Plotzkar myself when I vhas apout your age, an' I shtill look pack vith much bleasure on the day I resigned. You're a gredit to the memory o' your pore father—rest his dear soul!—an' I vish your gousin, Yussuf, vhas like yer, but he can't do right somehow; makes nothink put losses right 'nd left. He read in the paper a month ago apout a little poy, vhat vas a-valkin' along Great Portland Street, outside the Central Shool, a-leadin' a little pug dorg as he'd found, 'nd a Yiddisher lady a comin' py bought it orf of him, 'nd gif him a 'ole tenner for

44

it. Yussuf, as soon as he'd read it, shafed orf his side vhiskeys, 'nd cut his trowsys down to knickerpocker size, and he shpeculates in a dorg, from the Dorg's 'Ome, for halluf a dollar. It vhasn't kvite a pug, but Yussuf made up its ponum with a plackin'-prush, 'nd he coes up to Great Portland Shtreet 'nd starts a valkin' up an' down. That vhas the Fritay pefore Christmas, 'nd vhen I passed yesterday dere he vhas shtill, 'nd dere he's like to vait, to my mind, till dere's a frost in Sheol. He's vore out two pair o' boots at it, and vhat's vurse, the dog's grown into a mastiff, tirteen 'ands high. Ach! he finds a mat seer, he does! Talkin' o' shlemiels, Sam Gompertz, 'as just got into another shlemozzel vith de police, though, for *my* part, he can go away altoget'er an' not be missed, for I nefer kervite forgave 'im for a severe influenza-cold I caught as might ha' cost me my life. I'd been to pay him a visit out o' neighpourly boliteness, and vhen I come to go it vhas rainin' mickvah's o' cats an' dogs, an' vould yer pelieve it, he kep' me shtandin' dere in the rain on the front shteps nearly arf an hour vwhile he pointed out to me a silfer lining in de clouds, chust to safe lendin' me a umberella!

Anyvay, t'ree or four veeks ago he picks up vith a shicksa servant-gal on a Sunday afternoon

in Kew Cardens, an' after he's shtood her two or t'ree classes o' peer she comes over shikkur an' wants to go to shleeb. "Vell, vell, vell!" Sam says to her, "I do declare you must pe my leetle Cinderella; now shoost sit down on de crass, lay your 'ead on my shoulter, an' I tell ye de shtory o' de leetle class shlipper till ye co' to shleeb." So she lays her 'ead down—only *t'ink* of it, Chudah!—an' she dreams as she's Cinderella an' can even feel de Prinze's messencher's a-tryin' de class shlipppers on her feet. Pore girl! When she voke up she vhas pare-footed! Indeed Sam had efen taken her stockin's as vell!

Ve all vent to a lot of expense to try an' get Sam off; but he got two years, an' so, as dere's no likelihood of his pein' seen apout for eighteen months at least, ve've put his name down as havin' peen lost in de *Stella*, an' sent in a glaim for a share o' de Mayor o' Sout'ampton's fund, so perchance ve ain't out o' bocket at all at de finish.

Ah, Chuda, my poy, it aint orften as I'm up apout de Vest End now I don't carry de pag, but when I am I chenerally comes agross a bong mot. Here's vun I 'eard about Choe Levy, the money-lender in Burlin'ton Sthreet. Dere vhas a young Viscount as wanted a couple o' t'ousand, and didn't mind mashkinin' his fee-simple to git it. Vell,

much as Choe wanted to git 'old o' dat fee-simple, he didn't want to do it too cheap. "You know my price, my lad," says he, "seventy-five per cent., zame as when you vhas at Eton." "Oh, that be d——d," says the Viscount; "I aint a goin' to pay a stever over sixty. You kin do it or do the other thing!" Vell, dere vhas Choe, with 'is 'ands in his trowsers bockets, a-pinchin' lumps out of hissself in his anxiety; but he seed as the toff meant vhat he said. "All right," he says, "all right, I s'pose I *must* oblige yer. Come round on Saturday mornin' and I'll let yer have it." "But," said the youngster, "I thought you beggahs didn't do no business on a Saturday?" "No more ve do," says Choe, "it ain't pizness at *sixty*—it's *gharity*!"

Poor Jacky Gottleib's little poy is shtill very pad, 'nd vhat's more, the doctors don't seem to know vhat's wrong vith him. He vent unter *another* operation der oder day—true it vhas done at de Orsepital, so dere vashn't no expense *that* vay—indeed, at von time pore Jackey looked like gettin' 'alf a day's vurk out of it, but for its bein' disgoivered. It come apoudt like this. Ye rememper when dis poy vhas very young, his uncle Laurie, from Gimberley, give 'im a arf a couter for a Poorim box, 'nd the pore little

schnurrer shvalloved it. Vhell, nat'rilly, when the doctors at the Orsepital told Jacky as they'd 'ave to cut the pore little poy's stomach open, Jacky remempered the coin in his son's gedarrum. He told the doctor, 'onest and shtraitvorward, the torah truth. "I don't say as you *would* take it," he says, "but ve're on'y strangers, 'nd pizness is pizness, a man don't know who he shall trust—all I wants is to be bresent at der operation." Vhell, it so 'appened, they let 'im shtop. Dey lait de pore kid on der shlab, 'nd when dey cut 'im oben, dey lait vhat Jacky calls "anti-zeptig" sponges—most exbensive vuns—insite little Mossy, and berforms the oberation. Now, vwhether it vhas as the surtcheon vhas on'y a peginner surtcheon, or vwhether it vhas Jacky a 'zereisin at his elpow, gootness on'y knows, but when de oberation vhas ofer, and Mossy vhas pein sewed up, he oferlooged vun o' the sponges—Jacky didn't, mind yer; not he, he vhas a 'oldin' of his sides 'nd a larfin' to hissself for joy, for the sponge vhas vurth at ieast four to fife shillin'—but Jacky's mozzel vhas out. Some meddlin' nurse goes and gounts der spoonches, 'nd, findin' as dere's vun short actually has de stitches unpicked an' de sponge a-taken out o' little Mossy after all. I tell ye, when your

mozzles out like Jacky's is jest now ye *can't* do right.

Chudah, my poy, I t'ink you ought to know vhat vunders an' revolutions Mordecai Isaac's is makin' in the cigar trade. Gonophin' Gehazi! vhat *ain't* he doin'—Chudah, my poy, he does nothing but invent, invent, invent—ach! he's a tokkuf inventor.

It vhas chust dis time last year, I dessay you rememper, vhen he come out with his "Pasach Pullavays"—a peautiful Havanna cigar, at six-and-sixpence a pox—chust the tings to bass roundt at Barmitzvah's, or Brismelah's or partic'ly Meetin's of Greditors. The surprise vhas dat efery *vun* in *five* vhas made o' *real tobacco!* Vhell, now, chust pefore, Pasach agen, he's pin an' inventioned *anot'er* nofelty. Dis time it's der "Schveet Shofar" shmokes. Directions is gifen on every pox-lid dat dey're "pest vhen shmoked shtuck at a angle o' 45 in the *lower* jaw"—the shmoozer! Fact is, Chudah, dey're simbly imitation cigar-leaf *cases*, filled with tobacco dust; an', though I'll admit dey shmokes well enough vhen kep' at the right angle, perchance you forget yourself for a minute and let der shmoke tip te udder vay, all der tobaccer pours out—de cigar disembowels itself, as it vere.

It mayn't pe much, but a fardensvurth o' ~~pina~~ is a deal to a man vhen he sits down on 'em !

I suppose you ain't forgotten dot lofely liddle Leah Lazarus, vhat used to sit at 'er fader's door in Fashion Street, vhen he vhasn't so vell orf, an' used to 'awk lobsters an' chutspa photographs on 'Ampton racecourse? Vhell, she's jest eighteen. They're a livin' tokkuf now, up at Baltazzi 'Ouse, Montygew Square, an' all the young Goyisher svells is goin' mad about 'er. Certin unkind things 'as peen said about Leah an' a young City stockproker, but it ain't for me to repeat 'em. They give another dancin' party last Tuesday night (the thirty-ninth since Shevuoth), an' Mrs Lazarus says to old Ben Raphael (who ain't particular friendly vith 'em), "Mister Raphael," says she, "ve shall be pleased to see yer one evenin' afore the patt'ns all danced orf the carpet." "Don't trouble yerself about the patt'n, Mrs Lazarus," ses he ; "if vhat I hears is true, the next patt'n you 'ave 'll be a Kintpatt'n !" They said she cried ; but I don't b'leeve she could—'cept vhen she gets beat vith a *misere* hand.

Shbeakin' aboud gards, vhat a 'orrible close game dey play ofer at Ike Palestine's in Plooms-pury Skvare ! Shemor Beni ! I vhas dere de

oder night vhen a game at solo vhas on, an' follerin' a "pass" all round an interfering somepody counted the "kitty."

"Dere's a benny short; somepotty hasn't pud in," cried Isaacher Peagam.

"Dere's *my* penny, because it vas de only gopper I've got lefd," protested Manny Mendoza picking out one coin.

"Und dat's mine, pecause I make der mark of my t'umbnail on Vigdoria's cheek," put in Lew Rosenbaum, bickin' oud a scratched copper.

"Mine's got H for Hyams scratched pehind Pritannia where der light'ouse used to pe; see here," and Natty Hyams proved his protest.

Dere vhas a agonised silence lasting eighty-two seconds, den all three cried vit' a sigh :

"Teal dose——garts !"

Dat's a pad job for poor Sol Raphael of dat new clot'ing pizness vhat he shtarted. His prudder in Manchester got to 'ear of a chob lot o' unshrunk new flannel, soiled, at thirty-t'ree per cent. off fifty under cost price. Sol took the lot, and had it made up into vlannel shirts, vich he came out vith a big line at fippence t'ree-farthings apiece. Half-murdered Isaac! Vhat a rush vhas dere on dem vlannel shirts; in a couple o' hours dey vhas all solt out. And *you*

funny did it look next mornin'? All Petticoat Lane vhas in uniform—vilet, with black shtripes!

But Sol's mozzel vhas out. It rained all day o' T'ursday and—vhat could be expected!—dem shirts shrungk to sich an extent dat five customers vhas strangled afore dey could call somepody to cut deir neckpands!

Not a vurd—Sol's sewn up in a skin, an' gone pack to Hamburg in a cattle poat disguised as a steer, for de jury prought it in "Vilful Murder."

The Vursht Lane Shool congregation is goin' to petition the Rav for a new beadle, in consekvence of vhat de call a "compination of suspicious circumstances" vhat's took place there. Old Solomon Gompertz, ye remember, is very *fromm*; an', when he comes into the shool, takes his poots off, an' puts 'em under his shtott. Last Shobbas, when the service vhas ofer, Gompertz's poots vhas gone—*an' the follerin' mornin'—Sunday mornin'—the beadle shtarted on a valkin tour to the Surrey 'Ills!* It don't look kervite the thing, does it?

You make enkerviry after de Motzaberg's in Endsleigh Street; but—ach!—vhat vit' dere guiver an' dere chutspa, I don'd see 'em no more. Vhen I sit dere de oder day a-vaitin' till Motzaberg comes in an' listens to Mrs M.'s

foolish talk—(she'd pin to a Servants' Registry Office for a cook, an' dey asks her if a *plain* cook. "Ach?" says she, shruggin' her shoulders, "I much care! So long as she can cook, *my* part the ponum!")—an' bresently in comes vun o' de children, a shmall poy, nice an' clean up to his eyes, but all his forehead as black as de ace o' shuppa.

"Oh, jus' look at de chilt!" cries Mrs Motzaperg, "you, Aubery, you go shtraighd up to nurse — if *she's* pusy, go to de *under*-nurse——"

But de small poy checked her vit' a look of disgust. "Mudder," he says, "come off! You don'd shmoose old Penrino vit' dot shtuss. If I ain't clean it's pecause I vants longer under-linen; I've viped up as 'igh as me shirt 'ud reach!"

Yer Aunt Beckie choins me in affectionate vishes, Chudah, as yer cousin Golda vould, on'y she's gone to Ramsgit for a veek an' says she feels like she vhas de Molcha in her own right, a-gittin' up from de preakfast daple an' goin' out an' leavin' somepody else to vash up de cups and saucers.—Loheim!

YOUR UNGLE,
Mo.

A JEWELLER OF THE HALLS

AMONG people who use similes and comparisons to illustrate the thoughts they fain would publish, the subdolous fox and the sinuous weasel share the honour of supplying examples of vigilance and readiness to do business on the shortest possible notice ; but I think if it came to an actual contest, that the belt and the stakes would unquestionably go to the Jew Jeweller, familiar to the observant frequenter of almost any of our music-halls. He is "wider" than the Solent at the Bramble shoals !

And, right here, I would tell you of a little "testimonial" that was gotten up, in the long ago, as a mark of esteem and regard for poor old Tom Carlton, then consul at the Royal Music Hall.

Perhaps you remember Tommy ? He was a

harmless, good-natured soul, with a lot of shirt front and a little of the Ghetto about him, a philosopher whose private life seemed to be a perpetual struggle to induce the expenditure to fraternise with the receipts—on the lion and the lamb principle. Tommy hadn't had a benefit for quite a long while, and, though he was well satisfied that all things come in time to him who waits, the fact that his hair was getting thinner and thinner at the top was asserting itself nightly. Consequently, it happened one evening that he broached the subject to three or four of the most lurid frequenters of the hall, with the result that they instantly formed themselves into a committee, and did me the honour to elect me a member of it. A fund of a few guineas was soon whacked up, and a dear old chap, whose name need not be mentioned, took them in hand as honorary treasurer. Then arose the vital and all important question as to what form the testimonial should take. Somebody suggested a diamond stud and a new hat. As an amendment to the latter, another observant soul suggested "or new boots." A third most generously announced that his son, who was at a law stationer's in Lincoln's Inn, would be pleased to execute the obviously necessary illuminated vellum; he had indeed, already

sketched out a little bit of verse to go on it.
It went :—

To T. S. Carlton, whose large heart, like his large
hand, are one ;

From those who knows of what he's did, and like-
wise what he done.

From the Undersigned.

And the signatures of the committee were to follow. The effect produced on the promoters of the fraternal scheme by the reading of these lines was marked and electrical. A vote of thanks to the poet was carried *nem con.*, with a complimentary rider to the effect that the Muses owed many a man a good living ; but the worst of it was they were such shy debtors. In his pardonable pride, the poet's father blew in his next week's spending-money at the stalls' bar, and went home feeling that the privilege of calling Tennyson his eldest son would be high priced at sixpence. A speculative silversmith, who had taken too much to drink, was induced to subscribe one guinea, mainly on the strength of a vague suggestion that he might be consulted about a sugar-basin and cream-jug, or something, later on, and the meeting adjourned until the Saturday *matinée*.

Before that day arrived, however, a not altogether unexpected event happened. Tommy

waylaid the dear old chap, whose name need not be mentioned, but who acted as honorary treasurer, and pitched him a tale of distress as long as Peter Jackson's right arm. Something fearful—though at this distance of time I don't clearly remember what—was going to happen between him and his landlady, if he didn't take home eight pounds ten—which, curiously enough, was precisely the amount of the subscriptions in hand—that very night. It was then that the elderly gentleman, who had accepted office, found himself in a somewhat unenviable position. We have all been there. What? They say that a woman always has an idea that she can tell one taradiddle and then pull up, and, somewhat similarly, there are things that a man is too weak to refuse to do once, but swears he never will again. The dear old chap, whose name need not be mentioned, but who now cordially cursed himself for taking the job on, wavered. Tommy, noticing this, fired another volley of impassioned appeal, putting the whole of the occupants of the blue vault of heaven into the witness-box, so to speak, to testify to the truth of his statements. With the puckered brow of misgiving, the dear old chap pulled out the eight and a half, and handed it over, and whilst he wended his way

homeward with a heavy heart, the old gentleman who keeps the little oyster-shop round the corner in Queen Street suddenly became very busy.

So did Tommy.

So did the small boy that fetches the bottled stout.

.

What should a good-natured, middle-aged old boy, who has inadvertently accepted the office of honorary treasurer to a proposed testimonial to an impecunious music-hall manager, and who has allowed the *bénéficiaire*-elect to bluff him out of the cash in hand (*sic*) do? It was a problem worthy to be submitted to the pinks of propriety who correct the foibles of others in the columns of *Vanity Fair*. The old boy elected—unwisely, as I have always thought—to say not a single word about it; so, as Tommy Carlton was quite a popular person in his way, as the subscriptions rolled in gaily, and the object of the testimonial never failed to draw the brass as fast as it was collected, it was soon indeed a frigid night when he did not realise the beautiful lines of the poet:—

The lamp-posts were all of a quiver,
 The pavements were twisted and bowed,
 His kidneys were scorching; his liver
 Was groaning aloud.

It seemed quite probable that his extreme popularity would eventually land him in a dip shop. As the sum total of the amounts received continued to mount up, so, in proportion, did his eyes become redder and his breath a better thing to keep to wind'ard of. Pressure was brought to bear on the dear old chap, whose name need not be mentioned, who was acting as honorary treasurer, to close the lists, and bring the presentation off before *delirium tremens* ensued, and although for a time he resisted it, he finally fixed a date.

It was at this stage of the game that the inevitable Hebrew came into the affair, and, for once in a way, lent a much-needed tone to the proceedings. He was of the sort that stand at the bar though they drink not, but scrape acquaintance with rising comics, and sell them solitaire rings at alleged cost. His entry into the proceedings certainly did give promise of a consummation that had previously become problematical. It was a million to one, now that Gideon was in the scheme, that, as the pugulists say, "business only" was meant.

Persons who had rashly put their names down for "a couple," seeing things now taking shape, said that they only did so in the hope of influencing others. Others, mostly tradesmen, creditors

of the *bénéficiaire*, generously donated the amounts of the accounts they had been unable to collect. But there was a little "ready;" the young swells who were hopelessly mashed on the serios could always be depended upon to supply that. So the scheme moved steadily on.

At length came the eventful night, and early arrivals among the subscribers to the fund noted with satisfaction that a dozen bottles of the "own shipping" had been brought from the cellar, and that Tommy had had his hat ironed. The arrival of Mr Gideon in a new cream satin necktie, and, if possible, bulkier than ever about the overcoat pockets—for the Jew Jeweller of the Halls stows away his stock all over his person—put an end to all doubt. As the evening wore on, nearly every sympathiser, who had weighed in, turned up somewhere or other in the hall. At last, when the Spaghetti Troupe of Acrobats had contributed the last turn, and the tired musicians had faced round and cleared the place with the National Anthem, we foregathered in the bar. We were all there. In a few platitudes that had stood the test of time, the honorary treasurer brought forward the event of the evening. He mentioned more than once the great pleasure with which he had accepted the duties of office—repeated it *se*

often indeed that the job almost ceased to be honorary. When he came to the bed-rock of the testimonial itself, the token by which Tommy was to for ever remember the esteem and regard in which we held him, Mr Gideon produced a magnificent gold watch, fully the size of half a large turnip, on the end of a cable of the same metal, but of such liberal proportions that we could only look on aghast, and wonder however it could be done for the money. So glib was the old boy's description of the wonderful chronometer—ruby jewelled in fourteen holes, oxydised balance of the top and bottom couplings and set to partners, with compensated double-action levers and regulated aluminium whing-whang—that he seemed to speak like one inspired, and when he paused, for sheer want of breath, Mr Gideon broke in with reassuring earnestness, “May I die, but—well, there, it's a toff's lot!”

When Carlton put the great bauble in his pocket and the cable across his stomach, Mr Gideon was unable to restrain himself from putting his right arm affectionately around the manager's neck. It seemed to hamper Carlton somewhat in his reply, but he did not resent it. What is more, the Jew kept it there during the rest of the function. As nobody would allow the

recipient to waste his scudi in buying champagne for the push, we had, collectively, twenty-eight whiskies-and-sodas, seventeen brandies cold, three Benedictines, two Kummels, a lemon squash, and five small Bass's, and brought the proceedings to a termination with the usual vote of thanks to the fireman who was standing with the iron shutter ajar.

It was on the following night that I found the *bénéficiaire* and the ex-honorary secretary in angry contention. No cable ornamented the stomach of the former; no timekeeping mangel-wurzel bulged his waistcoat pocket. In tones of disgust the man who had bossed the collection remonstrated:

"Hang it all, Tommy, do be reasonable. You had every penny as it came in, and I even paid for that last round of drinks. Surely you'll weigh out the two quid Gideon's charged for lendin' the watch an' chain, or he threatens to come here on Saturday and expose the whole thing!"

HYAMSON'S MOURNERS

THEY were two ragged, ex-racecourse roustabouts, known to the pavement-pacers of Fleet Street as Tinker and the Ball's Pond Bum. A little dirtier and dustier than usual, they marched into the bar of the "Ben." The Bum flung a florin on to the counter, and ejaculated :

"Now, then, Tinker, beer up."

Such a display of wealth was quite unusual. The barman's lower jaw dropped with wonderment, and a couple of intoxicated yesterday's flies started a mad schottische round an attenuated beer-stain.

"Two pots o' six," said Tinker sententiously, and it was not until the countenance of each of his customers had been buried in the pewters for some seconds and then withdrawn, dripping with malt like two big dogs coming out of the Serpentine, that the astonished potman ventured to enquire :

“What’s bin a-appenin’? Somebody died an’ left yer somethink?”

“Don’ get frivolous, William,” said the Bum gravely; “did ye ever ’ear of anybody leavin’ *me* anythink save a beggin’ letter, or of me plankin’ down my brass without subsequently findin’ all the splinters in the plank? Don’t go an’ get gay, we’ve bin clean out to Willesden, me an’ Tinker, for the purpose o’ layin’ a floral tribute on the corfin o’ one o’ the decentest little Sheenies as ever waited for winners at the bottom of ’Are Court—Issy Hyamson. An’, moreover, this yere wreath was subscribed for by the sportsmen o’ Fleet Street, to the total o’ twenty-one-an’-ninepence!”

“Lor!” cried the strong man of the beer-engine, “d’ye mean to say they ain’t filled the grave in *yet*; why, Issy Hyamson’s funeral were yesterday week?”

The mourners’ four eyes met in a look full of meaning. Then the Tinker turned to the potman and said:

“As you seem to know somethink about it, William, you may as well ’ear the truth, but be shore you don’t let on a word to nobody. This is masonic.”

William nodded assent.

"The fact is," continued the Tinker, "that Bum and me, after permotin' an' raisin' this 'andsome subscription, made a slight clerical error in the date, an' when we got to th' cimmyterry with a elegant wreath as we paid eighteen an' a tanner for in Islin'ton, I'm blowed if we wasn't jest seven days an' a few odd hours too late!"

"An' wha' did yer do?" asked the interested dispenser of drinks, idly disembowelling a cockroach on the counter with the sharp edge of a chipped ale glass.

"Well," admitted the Tinker, "to tell it yer straight, we thought it a pity to leave eighteen an' a tanner a-layin' on the ground as it seemed, so we took the wreath to a pub. and watered it, an' sure enough the luck comes our way for once, for while we're a-standin' at the gates a-makin' up our plans, along comes a p'liceman's funeral, an' we unloads the floral tribute on the widder for five arf-crowns! An' who says as pore Issy ain't a-sleepin' jest as sound without it?"

"'Ear, 'ear, an' rest his soul!" chipped in the Ball's Ponder. "Come on, Tinker, beer up."

BEN BARNETT'S METHODS

SPEAKING of the entirely praiseworthy way our esteemed friends the Israelites have of getting to the top of every branch of the Arts and Sciences on which they roost, did you "ever hear tell" of Old Ben Barnett, who once upon a time ran the Vox Stellarum Varieties — for he swore he would have none but "stars"—at Dover?

Old Ben Barnett was just about as warm as the hinges on the front door of the bad place, and what he didn't know about running a music hall any bald-headed baby could have taught him. Every regular patron of the Vox Stellarum was a personal friend of Ben's, and he had, moreover, a knack — and a very happy knack it was, although it would hardly have worked at our Alhambra or Tivoli—of playing to his gallery that gained and held the entire confidence of that section of his house.

Rising from the post of honour at the chair-

man's table (his invariable seat on a Monday night), he would think nothing of stopping the star of the week in the middle of the "business" of her "turn" and haranguing his "gods" in such style as this:—

"There you are, me lads, wha' do ye think of 'er, eh? Ain't she a real bit of 'ot stuff? (*She's all right! Good old Ben!* the gods would shout in reply.) Didn' I tell yer las' Friday night as I'd got a real daisy-cutter a-comin'? An' 'aven't I got 'er for yer? (*Blimey, so you 'ave! Good on yer, Barney! Good old iron!*) Ah-h! Well, whadderyer think—I've got one a-comin' nex' week as can *fairy sing the arms orf 'er*—(only he didn't say arms), so NOW who's the champion caterer, eh? (*Brayvo! brayvo! Ongcoar! Ongcoar!*)". Then, turning and kissing his hand to his artiste, he would observe, "Go on, my dear, go on. They're a nice lot o' ——'s, they are, but you show 'em what *you* can do!"

Well, it chanced one summer-time that old Barnett billed a big turn that he had engaged solely on the representations of an agent in London. It was not by any means customary for him to do such a thing, but the go-between had been so very lavish in his praise of the performer, and the artiste's "bill matter" and his

"litho.'s" were so up-to-date that Barnett was on to him like tar.

He was The Great Harry Huntingdon, England's Peerless and Unrivalled Topical Actor-Vocalist.

The way in which old Barnett covered the hoardings and wall spaces of Dover with "He is coming!" and other particulars of the great engagement was really wonderful, whilst the amount of extemporaneous speechmaking he unloaded on his devoted galleryites was truly prodigious. Finally the night—and the hour—came. The great Harry Huntingdon burst upon the stage of the Vox Stellarum Varieties, and——

He couldn't sing for toffee!!

Rotten? He could have given cards and spades to the Spanish succession, and then walked over for the belt and the forfeits for sheer and utter rottenness! The gallery, adjudging him too bad to hiss, made vile noises at him; the stalls hooted, and the denizens of the scrag-hole, right at the back, made farmyard and stable echoes, and other "natural history" discords, until the Peerless Actor-Vocalist, wearing a worried look, that in no way harmonised with his extravagant toggery, made his exit.

Old Barnett was in the stalls bar, whither the comic made his way ; but instead of rounding on the miserable man, the proprietor was all kind words and sympathy.

"Never mind about them ——'s over there!" said he, indicating the audience ; "it's *me* you've got to please, not them, and *I* like yer. You'll be all right ; you see if you won't. 'Ere, to show you I've taken a fancy to you, you come an' 'ave a bit o' dinner at my private 'ouse to-morrow. I'm jiggered if you shan't enjoy yourself, and then I'll take you for a drive afterwards. I'll let the ——'s in the street see what *I* think of yer! You be round my 'ouse at three o'clock—see?"

Overwhelmed by these cheering words, England's Peerless and Unrivalled Topical Actor-Vocalist stood a bottle of the best. He could hardly do less. The gas took on a fresh brightness.

He was round at "the governor's" on the following day at the tick of three o'clock, and sate down to a dinner that was well worth training for. And when at last "full justice had been done to the sumptuous repast," as the old-school reporters say, round came the governor's horse and trap to the front door.

It was a bully drive. Through miles and miles

of wheat and hops, past ruined castles and bankrupt jam-farms, till, somewhere about the hour at which the plodding cowboy goes out and collects the ruminative Alderney for the sake of her lacteal output, old Barnett reined up outside the Crown and Sceptre at Barleyholt.

"Fifteen miles," said he, as he passed his fat hand affectionately over the little mare's fillets, "an' she's never turned a 'air. Now, 'Unty, my boy, we'll jest 'ave a cup 'o tea an' a cigar an' a turn round the kitchen garden, an' it'll be about time to see about gittin' back. What? Wanter washer 'ands. Yes, that's it, jest acrost there."

That night, as the outside clocks of Snargate Street indicated the hour of eight, old Barnett's trap rolled over the stones in the direction of the Vox Stellarum Varieties; but old Barnett was driving alone. Arrived in the vestibule of his music-hall, he called for his acting manager.

"Thompson," said he, "give us yer programme."

The acting manager pulled it from the front of his dress waistcoat, and handed it to his principal. With a stub of lead pencil and a demoniacal smile, old Barnett scribbled all over the name of England's Peerless and Unrivalled Topical Actor-Vocalist.

"You can take that ——'s name out," said he, "he's fifteen miles or more away!"

"Any substitute?" asked the manager.

"No. Let 'em each do a hextry song, 'an give the performin' bears ten minutes longer."

There is no good reason for needlessly prolonging the sequel. That night, at twenty-three minutes past ten, as the last "turn" was on, the great Harry Huntingdon, weary and worn, and travel-stained, with the perspiration streaming down his cheeks, and one boot busted, limped into the hall. He had run and walked the whole way from Barleyholt, sometimes taking a wrong turn and going back to complete the course, and here and there fording a brook. His looks were apprehensive of trouble, and his poor feet cried aloud for witch-hazel. Old Barnett was on to him in an instant.

"Oh, 'ere you are, are yer! I wonder you've got the face to come at all after disapp'intin' me and my audiencé like this! Upon me soul, little kindnesses is sheer chucked away on some people. 'Owever, yer don't play the fool with me, not likely! You've broke yer bloomin' contrac', an' there's an end of it!"

"What? Lend ye yer fare back to the smoke? Not me; I'm no Bible-cursed usurer, my lad, but

you can *earn* it if you've a mind to. 'Ow? Why, my 'ead cellarman's away this week, so you can understudy him. S'pose you start at once an'—go an' get up some small sodas ! ”

And England's Peerless and Unrivalled 'Topical Actor-Vocalist went.

THE GENTS OF THE GARRISON

SPEAKING of Yiddisher music-hall methods, Shotborough was a garrison town where there was precious little nocturnal gaiety save that which was promoted at Mr Simeon Emanuel's cheery Empire Theatre of Delightful Varieties; and when young Isidore Emanuel came home from Barnatoland, literally bristling with newly acquired wealth, and joined the old man in the business, the young gents up at the garrison looked forward to big things. Though the Shotborough Empire could in no sense compare with the London article, it wasn't half a bad place for where it was. Situated in the busiest street in the quaint old town, it "stood in its own grounds," and was approached by means of a couple of long, glass-roofed passages, on the walls of which hung quite a number of Paris plaster brackets, each supporting a figure or bust of a bygone celebrity, from Bacchante to Bismarck, and Euterpe to Edison. One or two

of these were slightly the worse for the assaults of the mischievous ; for instance, the pipe of Pan had been considerably curtailed, and quite a chunk had been chipped off the toga of Erato. These things had been done by the young gents of the garrison when in playful mood, and would not have mattered a very great deal save that old Emanuel was rather sore at never having caught an offender red-handed—not that he cared for the personalities of the images, but on a point of exacting recompense.

Now it happened one afternoon that Mr Emanuel's chairman, a worthy individual with dyed hair and a paste stud, had a communication of some importance to make to his employer. He had that morning been in the *public* bar of a certain quiet tavern in the town, just at the very time that a party of young bloods from the barracks were drinking and "a carryin' on" in the *private* compartment, and as there was only a thin matchboard partition between the chairman and the young swells, the former had heard all that the latter had got to say. This included a mild condemnation of the stinginess of the policy of young Mr Emanuel, who, instead of inaugurating his advent into the firm by a lavish expenditure on decorations, new scenery, and what

not—particularly the what not—had done nothing more than hang a few Matabele relics here and there on the walls, in itself a miserable effort at brightening up. Resenting such wretched parsimony, the boys had determined to celebrate a comrade's birthday that very night by "doing up" the Empire, and a suggestion to "smash those bally old images on the brackets" met with the warmest approval.

At this timely news Mr Emanuel grew thoughtful. He had little or no objection to the demolition of the busts and figures, providing he was well paid for them. As business took him out of the town that night, he sought his son Isidore and confided to him the news, winding up by telling him that the things originally cost him six sovereigns, but twelve would certainly have to be paid by the breaker or breakers of them. Then Mr Simeon Emanuel went on his way.

That night an extra waiter patrolled the corridor wherein stood the figures, which looked brighter and cleaner than they had ever done before, and altogether more likely to catch the roving eye. Seven, eight, nine o'clock came, and so in due course did the gents from the garrison. And by the time the seventh or

eighth round of drinks had been put down, playful was no word for 'em! Fifty voices were clamouring for drinks at once, with the result that none of their owners could get what they asked for. Soda water was splashing about, a sherry decanter was knocked down and smashed, and somebody had turned on the tap of the muller. Then Isidore Emanuel himself appeared and called for "a little leth funny bithnith, pleathe," and that started it. The cheering mob of young men swayed out towards the passage. A walking-stick whizzed through the air, and brought down the first of the images, a bust of General Booth, by the way; then another and another, each followed by a loud burst of cheering till the cavalcade reached the end of the passage. The doors leading from the street were burst open, there was a cry of "Wayo, Slops!" and a couple of policemen rushed in.

Oh! what a row did Isidore Emanuel raise over those broken images! What *would* his father say over the destruction of his property? The disgraceful conduct he didn't mind so much, but the smashing of his father's favourite images—! And that they *were* smashed there was not the least doubt, for the young gentlemen had done their work so thoroughly that nothing but

powdered chalk remained upon the stone floor. The police officers stood by hungrily waiting, as it seemed, to take any number of charges, the while young Mr Emanuel fetched his father's chairman out.

"Vhat did my father say these 'an'some statuaries cost him, Mister Booker?"

"They *cost* him twelve pounds, sir," said the lying but well-tutored Booker, adding, "but I don't think he'd ha' parted with 'em for twice the money."

"Vell, vell," said Isidore, "ve'll split the difference an' call it twenty. Now, chentlemen," he continued, leaving the unpleasant question to the captured, "terventy pounds, or must I lock yer up?"

Well, they didn't want any disgraceful charges at a police court, naturally, so a hat went round, and soon a score of sovereigns were collected and turned over to the magnanimous Hebrew.

Next morning, when the elder Emanuel returned, every figure was in its accustomed place. Bacchante smiled across at Bismarck, and Pan without his reed-pipe seemed to be whistling across to Erato to get his toga repaired.

Mr Emanuel seemed surprised and disap-

pointed. He went straight to his son and asked :

"Didn't dey come after all, den, Izzy?"

"Oh! they came all right!" smiled Isidore ;
"and vhat a gershrei did they have, too!"

"But dey ain't proke a single statoo?"

"No, not of *yours*," assented the son ; "but they reg'lar kiboshed mine to atoms!"

"*Yours*?"

"Yus, mine. I wired up to Leather Lane, an' got a crate o' cheap 'uns—four-an'-twenty bobs' worth—down by passenger train, an' got 'em just in time, too."

Mortification was plainly expressed on the elder's face.

"And *me*?" he asked; "ain't *I* in this, Izzy?"

"Not a stever," returned the son; "your money wasn't on last night."

The mingled expressions on the old man's face warred together for mastery. At one moment grief and disappointment had the turn; then paternal pride got a show. With tears in his eyes he grabbed his offspring's paws.

"You vagapond!" he cried; "you dam vagapond! an' yet—an' yet you're a—you're a—dammit, a ornament to the community!"

And so he was, too.

A BILK THAT FAILED

"**I**F so be as a man with a wife an' children dependin' on him, an' no wealthy relatives to fall back on, seeks to make an 'onest livin' out of a livery stable nowadays," remarked old Bill Whimblett, of Clapham Park, with whom I was discussing the times, "the leadin' characteristics rekerwired of him is patience, good temper, ability to subsist on 'ay an' oats in an emergency, jocularly, faculty to use his dooks, bravery, chivalry, Machiavelian craftiness, an' a good stock o' clothes."

There was a distinct tinge of sadness in the tone in which old William made this admission. Man and boy, he had been in the business since he could cry "Whoa!" and his forefathers had jobbed cattle since the beginning of the Christian era. One of the old man's most cherished possessions, indeed, was an extremely old print, in which was represented Whimblett Primus, tooling a four-in-hand team of well-matched, hog-maned

unicorns, and a coach-load of Ancient Britons, down to the Island of Thanet to meet Hengist and Horsa on landing. Anyway, old Bill Whimblett "knew his livery stable," as the term goes, from the old Arabian fragrance outwards, and when *we* said things were bad, things were bad.

"No, I don't appre'end no serious oppersition from the motors," he remarked, in answer to my query on the subject. "It ain't the motors as we 'ave to contend ag'inst so much as the bilkers—oh, the bilkin' that goes on in a job stable would wring pity from a pawnbroker! Give yer an instance of it? Why——"

He paused and looked me up and down with his merry, rolling eye. He knew I was a traitor, and that I earned my bread by the cramp in my right hand, that I only sought to draw him out for my own gain. What a miserable wretch is he who simulates an interest in the misfortunes of others only to put them in his paper!

"Talking's dry work, William," said I; "come and have a damper."

He did not hesitate long. Only just long enough to pop his honest old head in at a harness-room door and call out to an unseen "Fred" bear in mind to "jest go round to Bishop's

about that split crupper-dock," and then we crossed the road to the little private bar in which he discussed and settled most of his weighty bits of business.

"I'll give yer a little instance that 'appened on'y o' Sunday," he began, with a convincing wag of his head, after the first swig at his tumbler of warm brandy and water.

"Fire away."

"There's a large an' increasin' colony o' Yids round these parts," he observed, "an' of all classes o' society the Yids does love to go for a drive out on a Sunday arternoon. The middle-aged an' the old 'uns mostly patternizes the keb-ranks, an' takes a hansom by the 'our—when they kin get one; for I oughter tell yer we've got ten or a dozen very nobby 'lots' down this road, you know—driver in a white tie an' a guinea 'at, with a sixty-pound cob an' a brand-new 'Forder' with all the latest improvements. Up comes Mister an' Missis Dirtyberg-Isaacs. 'Hi, cabby!' cries the old Sheeny, 'I takes yer py de hour. D'ye know de Glope Road, Mile End?' Glossy George—that's the driver it 'appened to—smiles sort of half pitiful an' half sarcastic, an' he says, 'Very sorry, guv'nor, but I'm engaged. You

kin see for yourself as the toff's left his *Referee* on the seat to keep the keb! ' ' At the recollection of Glossy George's artifice Mr Whimblett's sides shook with suppressed laughter, but presently he resumed his discourse.

"But it's the *young Yids as takes me on*," he continued, "the boys just a blossomin' into men, as thinks it smart to kid the laundress to wash the bosoms on'y of their shirts, an' charge 'em twopence, so's to leave twopence for a gardenia button-'ole. Oh, they're very peas-in-the-pot! Anyway, it was jest after eleven, or mighter been nigh on twelve, las' Sunday mornin', when a party o' four comes inter the yard, two o' these young Yiddisher smartys, an' two young wimmin——"

"Courting, possibly," I suggested.

"You're *very* likely right," assented old Whimblett, "an' they was the sort o' gals that looked as though they could stand it, too. Just, as you might say, as a wooden leg could take all the poulticing you could give it? But 'owever. One o' the young chaps, actin' as spokesman, says they want an 'oss an' wagginette to go as far as Croydon; 'ow much the job? ' 'Ow long d'ye want to stop there?' says I, 'Oh, no time,' says he. 'Well,' says I, 'twelve bob won't

'urt yer?' 'No,' says he, 'that'll do,' and Fred puts the 'oss in, an' away they goes."

"But I thought," I said, interrupting him, "that you always let these things out by the hour?"

"We're glad to let 'em as best we can 'at this time o' year," responded old Whimblett, rather testily I thought, "but we nacherally expec's *some* sort o' stickin' to the contrac', an' startin' for Croydon at noon, I certainly looked to see 'em back by four."

"And what time was it when they *did* turn up?"

The mere query caused Mr Whimblett to grow crimson with suppressed indignation. His jowl coloured up like the seemingly unnecessary wattles on the big turkey, as he literally shouted:

"Ten minutes to one o' Monday mornin'!"

"Too bad!" said I; "but, of course, you were in bed?"

"Not much, I wasn't!" cried the old man warmly; "that game wouldn't answer for nuts! They're mild enough, some of 'em, when they takes yer little lot out; but sometimes, when they comes back 'oiled up,' they wants to fight yer for the 'ire, an' one stableman couldn't 'andle 'em an' the 'oss an' trap as well."

“And was that the trouble in this case?”

“Well, not exac’ly. They drives in an’ the ’oss is fit to drop. ‘Lor lummy,’ says I, ‘wher’re yer bin stampedin’ to?’ ‘Croydon,’ says the spokesman, ‘where we told yer!’ ‘That ’oss wouldn’t look like that if he’d on’y been to Croydon,’ says I; ‘look at him.’ ‘I’ve bin lookin’ at him all day,’ says the cheeky young swine; ‘but they always looks like that when you feed ’em on the ’ay what you gets at the chiner-and-glass shop. You oughter give him somethink to eat at first-’and!’ The gals chuckled at this, an’ it rather got my rag out. Still, if you take the law into yer own ’ands you loses yer money! So I calls Fred. ‘Fred,’ says I, ‘jest tell us where they’ve been to, will yer?’ Now, you wouldn’t think we could tell that, would yer?’

“No, certainly not,” I admitted

“*They* didn’t think so, either! Evidently the two coveys were dead puzzled about what was coming, an’ the feminines nacherally was curious—they always is. It was a’most too dark to see what old Fred was doin’, but we all of us ’ears his voice when he calls out, ‘First place they stopped at was the *Blue Pig*, at Norb’ry, sir!’ ‘Yus, Fred, go on,’ says I. ‘Then they went on

sir,' cries the voice of old Fred, 'through Thornton 'Eath an' Croydon, an' pulled up at the *Lord Nelson*, on the road to Caterham.' 'Very good, Fred,' says I, 'and then?' 'They goes on through Purley, sir,' continues old Fred, 'an' stops at that little beer-'ouse jest this side o' Cane Hill!' I just turns round to pipe off the effect all this is 'avvin' on 'em. Lor! you never did see sich a thing in all your life! The two chaps' lower jaws had dropped; they couldn't ha' been worse if a ghost 'ad been a-speakin'! As for the bits o' muslin—strooth! They was whiter nor yer collar, an' whilst one of 'em's teeth chattered like she had the ague, the other was whisperin' to one of the fellers to own up. But, 'owever. When you gives a 'oss a ball, you rams it right down his throat, an' so it 'ad to be here with these here beauties. So I calls out, 'Where to after Cane 'Ill, Fred?' Back comes old Fred's sepulch'ral voice outer the darkness, '*The Chequers*, at 'Orley, sir!' I didn't want no more after that. I turns round, grabs hold o' the covey what drove, by the arm, an' I says, 'Own up—you druv this 'oss o' mine to Brighton an' back, now aint yer?' 'What's the good o' me denyin' of it,' says he, 'since you've 'ad a (blank) ghost out a-watchin of us?'

‘None whatever,’ says I, ‘an’ now understand me: this’ll cost yer fifteen shillin’s apiece! Brass up now if you’ve got it; if not send it round afore nine in the mornin’, or——.’ ‘Or what?’ says the young fellow, apprehensive like. ‘Or,’ says I, ‘I shall ’ave to call round on the mothers o’ these young wimmin—d’ye understand me? my ghost ain’t read yer the whole o’ the story yet!’ ‘Blimy, *I’m payin’!*’ say he; and sure enough, he parted, too, and bunged old Fred a shillin’ for hisself!”

“Wonderful!” I exclaimed, enthusiastically; “some newly-invented machine, I presume?”

“Newly-invented machine, my aunt!” he responded, swilling his cooling grog in the glass preparatory to draining off what remained of it. “The newly-invented register is a machine as old as Slangham Hill—an occasional pint o’ beer to every ’ossler along the road! They knows my traps, an’ they knows what these young Yiddisher bilks is capable of, and a neat little chalk mark on the under carriage of the wagginette—chalked on the near-side goin’ out an’ the off-side comin’ ’ome—never fails to tell yer *very* nearly all that’s ’appened!”

AT SHEVUOTH

*An Epistle addressed by Mr Moses Benrimo, of
Bevis Marks, to his Nephew in Johannis-
burg on the eve of the Feast of Trees.*

MY TEAR CHUDAH,

Some great religious writer, whose name I don't rememper at de moment, vunce said as "de hall-mark's lost vhen de plate's melted," but, like all rules, dis vun too has it's exception. Yer arf-cousin, Lou Lyons, melted out o' dis gommunity many years ago, but I come across him de oder day, Chudah, in Sout'-ampton, and—his 'all-mark's chust de same. His lameness still reminds his friends o' Peter's year at Ascot, vhen Lou made a pook on de roof o' de Grand Stand, an' foolishly took on de wrong mob, an', as he couldn't fly vhen dey dropped him ofer, he fell vith a sickenin' plunk in amongst de rhodydendrions chust outside de telegraph vinder on de reserved lawn.

He's a-gettin' a elegant livin', he tells me,

at a mossamotten called de "map fake," an', if you've nefer heard of it, dere's vun bit o' choy an' delight a-comin' to yer late in life, as de fortune-tellin' old maid said to 'erself vhen at fifty she married a soldier.

In de first blace, let me tell yer, dere's no blace for de map fake like a seaport town, an' very few to beat Sout'ampton, vith its shippin' an' its docks, an' all dat. Dey say dere yhas no dock companies in de days vhen de Yidden suffered under Pharaoh, but shtill he managed to teach 'em a good deal apout pondage. Anyvay, Sout'ampton's a town vhere dere's 'undreds an' 'undreds o' maps—maps o' China, Australia, Sout' Africa, India—everywhere! Dere's maps posted up in de railway-station, maps all round de valls o' de docks, but de pest an' most accurate—maps vith all de scratchin's an' arrifals marked, as a racin' man 'ud say—is in de sdeamshib orffices. An' dey're sich nice, civil glerks in dese orffices, too; takin' trouple vit' strangers seems to pe dey're long suit; dey pulls out a map an' finds a blace for yer vit'out a murmur.

The vay Lou finds his mugs is various. Sometimes he 'aves to lay in vait for vun for many days; at others he 'as de mozzel to

come acrost t'ree or four together, vhen it's easy enough to chip in; simbly got to insert a sort o' conversational jimmy into de discussion and come in. Lou's on'y got to find out vhere his man comes from, an' then he vurks accordin'. Say, for instance, he's an Australian. He an' Lou chums up together an' agrees to make a call or two in Sout'ampton afore goin' aboard de rattler. Bime-by Lou lands 'im in the smokin'-room o' the nearest hotel to the P. and O. Company's place. It's a cosy little room vith a nice fire burnin', and a captain is settin' writin' a letter at a liddle taple an' a-drinkin' a class o' whisky. Lou pulls de pell, orders two fresh vhiskeys up an' two cigars, an' shtarts talkin' apout Australia. Den bresently he jerks out "Ah," says he, "it seems on'y like yesterday vhen I vhas out in Proken Pay, just south o' Sydney—" "South o' *vhat?*" says de mug, "Proken Bay's *north* o' Sydney!" "Vhell, dat's vun it!" cries Lou, "vherefer ye got yer schoolin' from I don' know, but, 'less de worl'dt's pin slewed round by a eart'kervake or somet'ink Proker Pay's *still* south o' Sydney!" "But, dammit man," bersists de mug, "I vhas *porn* dere: I oughter know!" "I ain't answerable for *your* misfortunes," Lou goes on, "but

I'm ready to back my 'pinion vith me money.—'Ere, Proken Pay's south o' Sydney for five quid?" De mug can't get his stuff out kervick enough! "I'll go yer!" he yells, "but who's to 'old de shtakes?" "Oh," says Lou, "ve'll arst de cabtain 'ere, vhat's a-writin' of his letters; ve shan't be ten minutes a-steppin' round de gorner to de P and O orfice." So de captain holds de shtakes an' round dey goes, and—natural enough—dey see as Proker Pay is north o' Sydney. Of course, Lou's mighty cut-up at dis, put not so much as de Nort'-of-Sydney cove vhen dey get's pack an' finds dat de letter-writin' cabtain has guyed vit' the pot.

An' who blays de cabtain? you'll naturally ask. Vhy, olt Joe Leapman, Chudah, old Joe Leapman; him as got put away for ten years for gonophin' a public-'ouse till an' a-settin' the olt voman vhat kep' it on the top o' the bar-parlour fire, the very same day as Knight o' Burghley vun the Lincoln 'Andicap. You rememper, don'd yer?

Ve powled Aaron Motzaperger out in a shweet little pit o' gonophin' de oder day, which is likely to get him a pit o' vhat de Goyus's call "time." Ve vhas all down to Prighton for a bigdure sale, an' Aaron kep' on a-runnin' into the

telygraph orfice efery five minutes, 'nd says,
"Ish dere a delegram for me?"

"No, Mr Motzaberger," says the schveet
young shiksa.

He goes oudt for apout svei minutes 'n back
he comes.

"Os dat delegram for me come?"

"No, Mr Motzaberger, there's no telegram
for you."

Says I to Eily Geisenheimer, who I vhas vit,
"Eily, dere's something on."

Bresently pack he comes again.

"Are you sure dere's no delegram for me?"

"Certainly."

De young girl was gettin' a bit tired. I says
to her, "Would ye be so good to gif me an
envelope?" "Vhell," she says, "it's against the
rules, but as it's *you*—." She gif me de envelope,
'n ve puts a' old sheet o' paper in it—a' old
railway bill vhat vhas 'ung up in the office—'n
addresses it to "A. Motzaberger," and leaves it
on the gounter, just vhere he could see it. In he
gomes.

"Ish dere a delegram *yet*?"

"I ain't seen vun," she says.

"Vhy, 'ere it lays," says he, a pickin' up the
shlenter.

Vith eager 'ands he tore open the envelope, an' drew out de paper. It proves he nefer looked at it; but he rolls up his eyes and shtrikes a agonised position.

"Mein Gott! mein Gott!" says he, "dis fatal message tells me dot my peautiful clothing pizness ish all burnt oop! Vhat *shall* I do, vhat *shall* I do?"

Ve nefer said a vordt, of course, put I know vhat *ve* shall do when ve finds out vhat orfice it's insured in! He'll 'ave to take a third share, or nothink!

Speakin' o' vvhich reminds me, Chudah, as yer farder's old friend, Hyman Botibol, is down 'ere. He's done nothink since the vinter before last, when his shop got burnt down yhiilst the mains vhas all frozen. He shtill says as composition is the soul o' pizness, so, afore he settles down an' shtarts a furnishin' a 'ouse as he's got his eye on in the Sutherland Avvynoo, he thinks he'll take advantage o' the Act just vunce more. After all, Chudah, he's on'y peen through the Court four times—an' vhat's that? He's 'ad a valuable tip, too, from somepody vhat he knows in de Pangkrubtcy Court, an' dey've told him not to make Mrs Botibol de brincibal greditor *dis* time, as de Court has pegun to take notice of his little yeak-

ness, so 'ow he'll arrange it I don't know—especially as it's in his deed o' bartnershib vith Asher Marks, dat in case of fire or pangkrubtcy, dey goes share an' share alike.

Ve 'ad de first 'ousevarmin' since de Shivva o' pore Sol Simmons, vhat vhas run ofer by a p'lice-van—rest his soul!—in Ploomsperry Skervare a Vensday. A miescotte, Chudah, and *yow* miescotte! Vhen you make a barty, say I, *make* a barty: *dis* vhas duller even den the Shivva; for ye recollect dere *vhas* some fun *dere*, 'specially vhen somepody asked little fife-year-oldt Marky vhat he'd do now his fader vhas dead, an' he said, 'Vy, vear my new poots to the levoyah, ye momzir!"

Missis Simmons—she must come the shlenter-tokkuf!—invited de Referend Oker Pöh-Levi from de Unreformed Synagogue—*you* remember him, Chudah; de chazan as called on Pen Moses to resign at his shool, for lettin' his shop catch afire vhen his stock vhas so low—vhell, he's a ghampion biano-player, an' he blayed, an' he blayed, an' he blayed—oh, Boruch habo! ye all vent sount to sleep. An' py-an'-py, vhen vun would ha' t'ought he'd exhausted his whole *rebetoire*, he turns roundt to Missis Simmons, an' t'inkin' it's on'y her habit to giose ner eyes

when a-listenin' to ghampion biano-playin', he says:

"An' now, Missis Simmons, vhat shall I blay *now?*"

"Keep on vith trumps, Mister Levi, keep on vith trumps," she murmured, as she dozed off again.

I must say as I t'ink young Simmons runs de t'ing into de ground a pit vhen he advertises like dis in de *Sportsman*:

"Mr Solomon Simmons, jun., returns THANKS for the many kind visits, letters, and cards of condolence received during the week of mourning for his late father. 158a, Bloomsbury Square, and Victoria Club, Wellington Street, Strand. Monday next, old spot, Tatlersall's Ring, Kemptou. S.P. on all races."

Dot poy's caused pore Sol many an' many a 'eartache. He could shpend de poshers a goot deal faster dan de olt man could make 'em. I rememper vun Saturday at Alexander's Park he come a-runnin' up to his fader in de baddock, an' he cries:

"'Ere dad, I've bin an' pought a trotter."

"'Ave yer?" answers olt Sol, innocently; "vhell, *I've* pought a lobster meself; let's get a pottle o' peer, an' borrer de vinegar, an' 'ave lunch under de drees afore racin' starts!"

Vhen de young 'un tolt him it vhasn't a pig's

foot he meant, but a eighty-guinea pacin'-'orse, I really did t'ink for a-vhile as olt Sol would ha' gone mershugga!

Ach! he'll preak his mudder's 'eart yet. On'y de udder mornin' I vhas round dere ven he come down to 'is preakfast, an' all he could take on vhas a radish an' a prandy-an'-soda, an' to shtop his mudder a-cryin' ofer him, he said it vhas pecos he'd shust pecome a vegetarian.

Vhell, Chudah, my poy, here's vishin' ye de greatest mozzel—(Ach! 'ow could ye do vith de toy contract to Santy Klaws, eh?)—an' nefer pe in holes on a Yontov whilst you've sitzsitzs to sew yith.

YOUR LOVIN' UNGLE,
Mo.

EIGHT TO ONE, BAR ONE

IN all periods of Turf history the racecourse has wrongly and unjustly been held responsible for all sorts and conditions of bad men, for broken-up homes, abandoned wives, ruined digestions, filthy whisky, spitting of blood, cramp in the kick, lobsters that have died in travail—or travel—and Jews that have been blackballed for membership in Hell, but of all the unmitigated, plu-perfect degenerate scoundrels that ever snatched a ticket or bounced a gate-keeper, Joe Polack was the hottest. Professor Bunyon's Nerve Powders could have accomplished nothing for Joseph.

And yet Joseph's whole life, which deep respect for the iniquitous and one-sided law relating to libel alone deters me from setting down, had been one long series of crippled enterprise. Joseph was wide between the eyes and eminently up to snuff, but bad luck had it always in for him. How did it follow him to

Islington, when and where, in the glorious summer of '93, he had his first fire? At half-past nine on a fateful Sunday night, the first wreath of smoke curled negligently out of the top window of his recently established ready-made clothing factory in the back street, and Joseph rubbed his palms together and repeated the prayer for immunity from rain. Bah! Didn't work for shavings! One moment later, at 9.31 precisely, exactly fourteen hundred and seventeen prize firemen—Belgian, British, French, Dutch, American, Italian, and even a hook-and-ladder company from Tokio—swarmed into the street, and by 9.36 you might have passed Polack's business premises through a wringing machine! By sheer rugged luck he had quite forgotten the fact that the International Fire Brigade's Demonstration at the Agricultural Hall was in full blast!

On the last day of the First July meeting at Newmarket two years back, Joseph was standing in Tattersall's Ring with but a single half-sovereign in the world. Baked by the sun and broke by unreliable information, he perched there on the flower-starred greensward, from which the blended scents of meadow-sweet and plantain arose, and inwardly cursed the wealthy,

who lounged in the shade of the beech plantation on the other side of the broad course. The "heads" were falling over one another to lay 5 to 1 on Kilcock for the opening race, and none but a born "case" for Hanwell would have tried to find anything to beat it; but Joseph was desperate. The unexpected is constantly coming off—especially Behind the Ditch—and betting is like swearing, you're frequently right into it while framing the resolution to let it alone.

Six halves, Brechin, was Joseph's meal, taken with the veteran Benjamin Hyams, and the number of the paste-board was five seven seven two six.

But, bless you! the transaction was no more good to him than a pain in the stomach, for Charlie Wood on the favourite simply lay well up with the three only that he had to beat, and, letting Kilcock out as they mounted the crest of the hill, smothered the field and won in a canter. Polack felt about as sick and discouraged as Noah must have done when, after scouring the land and putting three advertisements in the *Stock-keeper*, he failed to get a brace of prize daschunds for his otherwise unequalled congress of wild and domesticated

animals without sin. He stood around whilst Hyams paid out, and even if he could have recognised his little golden ewe lamb he could not have sworn which lucky backer carried it off.

They keep close time at headquarters on the final day, and ere the last supporter of Kilcock had drawn his brass, the numbers of the runners for a Welter Handicap were being shouted out. Soon the bookies' favourite chaunt of "six to fourth' fee-ald" (for there were fifteen runners), echoed over the Heath, Altesse being a hot favourite with offers of "seven to one, bar one."

Still hanging about the bookie who had had his last bit of red, Joseph Polack was struck by a remarkable coincidence. The son of old Benjamin, who was recording his father's wagers, bore quite a striking resemblance to himself, and no sooner did he become aware of the fact than a pleased and even joyful expression overspread his countenance. He drew a little closer in order to make a more minute examination, and was evidently quite satisfied with his scrutiny.

Inside his jacket pocket his nimble fingers ~~tayed~~ nervously with ticket number five seven seven two six, and he glanced hurriedly about

him. A tall, serious-looking man, with a face as miserable as the seven years of famine alluded to in Scripture, approached the burly, blue-spectacled Hyams.

"What will you lay me Peacock, Hyams?" he asked.

"Sevens bar one—'ere, seven to one Peacock!" cried the bookie.

"I'll take your eighty pounds to ten," dallied the bartering backer; but old Ben only shook his head. The backer turned away with the bank note still in his fist. Joseph hastily made his mind up; such a chance might never offer again. Dashing after the sad-faced punter, he caught him by the coat sleeve.

"Here you are, sir, *father'll lay it yer!*" he said, and as he did so he held out brief number 57,726. The single instant for which the backer hesitated seemed an age, but he took the bait. Polack grabbed the tenner, and the sombre man copped the snide brief.

Just then the bell rang, and, a moment later, the horses flashed past the post—Altesse an easy winner and Peacock second. The man who carried his heart in his face waited till they yelled "All right!" then tore the fateful ticket into fragments. With philosophic composure

Joseph Polack moistened a stick of black lead-pencil on his lips and marked his card with the ambiguous legend, "Won 10."

I must acknowledge, with regret, that there is no moral to this story.

JOE JOEL'S DINING-TABLE

THE monotonous narrative of a long-extended financial slump poured into my ear by Joe Joel, as he walked beside me one evening between the Continental and Piccadilly Corner, was identical in every detail with five hundred stories I had heard before; but the request with which all these anecdotes are headed up was built on a new basis, and so out came my half-dollar.

He only wanted that coin to "inspire confidence," he declared. Not in me, permit me to explain, but in any young gentleman he might chance to come across in the course of the evening, and inveigle into the wild distractions of tossing. "They soon lose faith," he said, "when a man keeps on puttin' down the same penny."

I told him, as though I had inwardly thought the matter over, that I didn't doubt it. I suppose I was in a good temper. It couldn't have been

real ; it must have been a stage of intoxication. I've noticed it in others. One more liqueur of old brandy would have overdone it ; one less would have been too few. Wish I could remember how many I'd had.

There had been a time when Joseph's excessive dressiness and remarkable variety of costume had won for him the distinguished title among his fellows of "The Daily Hint from Paris," but that, alas! was past and gone. Yet Joseph had struggled long and (unlike—as *his* story went—his simple, but illustrious, namesake who repulsed Mdme. Potiphar) unsuccessfully, and he had the reputation of being, when "business" was done, a model husband. I can't say that I'm partial to the model husband, possibly because he has been recommended to my notice at times when I was not good-tempered. Generally you find that a double-forte allegro wife, wearing a shirt-front and a masculine necktie, goes with the model husband, and that's not according to my family's notion of cricket.

But, worthy or unworthy, Joe was proud of his wife and his home, and—hereby hangs this little incident.

The varying and uncertain nature of the income of the "backer of horses" may possibly

account for his ostentation when in funds, and nothing pleases the Yiddisher race-goer of the lower order more than to show you his nest, and how well he has fixed it. He mayn't live in the middle of St James's Park, or be able to read Homer at sight, but—go and see "*his* little drum, and tell him what you think about it."

The old subject cropped up last Saturday in a Shaftesbury Avenue bar, where Joseph and a few of his brethren were congregated, and Hopper Isaacs was waxing very truculent about *his* "lot." Times had been bad, he owned, and exes never were heavier—twenty thousand hundredweight to the ton—but *his* old woman and "lord-forbids," as he called them in rhyming slang, hadn't wanted for anything. Indeed, he bought the gals a new grand pianner, with a terry-cotta bust of Doctor Adler, and a coloured portrait of Victor Wild in a plush frame to stand a-top of it, whilst he'd set the old Dutch draping the mantel boards in seal plush against the summer, when the fires were over. He'd got his eye on a inlaid dinin'-table that the party what belonged to it wanted sixty quid for. And 'ow would he "go" on Sunday, eatin' the roast an' boiled off a cain-an'-abel that cost three-score?

Joe Joel had been listening to all this with an air of critical amusement. It might be a new and exhilaratin' experience to his friend Bowles, he said, but, since the subject had cropped up, probably nobody there was aware that for some months past he'd eaten his meals off a table that he wouldn't take a hund'ed for, not if it was put down on that bar, there!

Unsuppressed ribaldry greeted this pronouncement, for it was well known that the grass had been very short in Joseph's country for some time; but Joel's manner was so staid and serious that the merriment soon subsided.

"*You* eat off a table you wouldn't take a hund'ed for? I'll bet you a couple you don't," cried Isaacs, and he pulled out two sovereigns, and slapped them down upon the bar in support of his wager.

Joseph had not the "ready" to cover them, but the bet was allowed to stand.

"My dinner'll be laid at ha'past seven," he said; "it's only round in Gerrard Street, and those that cares to look on is welcome."

And he won his bet, too, did the model husband, though the only articles of furniture in his basement dining-room were a paraffin lamp, a cane-seat chair, an oil-man's starch box, and

a "M'Call's Guide." For, when the judges descended, Joseph's baritone better half was sitting on the chair with a plate of beans and kugel in her lap, and Joseph, pulling out the starch box, and taking his seat on the north end of it, and his knife and fork in hand, chipped in before all the tit-bits were demolished, and ate his dinner off his priceless table—his wife's knees!

"O FOR OCTOBER"

IF it indeed be true that all sinners who hedge at the last moment and die repentant shall enter the pearly gates of Paradise to the singing of winged choirs, what a rustle there'll be amongst the birds when Dave Raphael passes the postern gate! None could be surprised if the star soloists in the Spirit Chorus temporarily forgot themselves and dropped into the mundane ballad of "Fancy Meeting *You?*" for David Raphael had never been anything else but a gonoph, dyed in the wool, from his barmitzvah up. With an unconquerable fondness for the criminal classes, I had taken an intellectual interest in David from the time when, as a mere schoolboy who had been mercilessly caned by a bad-tempered master, he came before the public eye, and was termed with delightful appropriateness by an enterprising reporter of police-court transactions "a raw lad of ten," and when at last he was tried for murder—(in

a children's game on the beach at Margate he playfully buried his burdensome first wife in the sand, and subsequently claimed that he went away and forgot all about her)—I did not forsake him.

For David was stock-in-trade to me. I do not attempt to mislead the reader to suppose that these stories of the lower Hebrew life are purely imaginary; a man needs help in order to raise a laugh; on the other hand, he can generally contrive to heave a sigh without assistance. So, whilst David "did the time," I saw to the write-up's and, what is more, got paid for them. When the small seaside hotel in which Raphael once invested a Derby winnings and rechristened by the name of The Guy Fawkes Arms, was burned to the ground on the following Fifth of November, David tried hard to make the jury (before whom the insurance people brought him) see that the whole thing was dominated by "the long arm of coincidence"; but they were a pig-headed, ignorant lot, as juries generally are. David left Margate society for a period of five years; but I set aside, out of what I realised on the romance, enough to send him down to the Newmarket First October immediately following his release, with six gross of

prawns and a couple of packs of cards, and if you don't call that putting an Israelite back into the world again, you and I have not graduated at the same college of observation.

The last time I saw David Raphael was at Barnet Horse Fair. Behind a hedge in the meadow that lies on the right-hand side of the road, away from the boxing booths, the gingerbread stalls, the steam roundabouts, and the exhibitions of fattened females, he stood by the side of an inverted umbrella. The ferrule of this article, plunged deep into the greensward, kept the brolly stationary, and over its outstretched silken breadths were displayed six-and-twenty open envelopes. In each envelope was a pink card, on which was printed one of the capital letters of the alphabet, from A to Z. Owing to the fact that the cards were what the stationers term "Court" size, and the envelopes only "Commercial," which is smaller, nearly one-third of each card—and that the top third—was in each case exposed. In other words, one had to guess from the letter's *carte de visite* what its "panel full length" might be like.

The instant I entered the field David left off haranguing the grinning crowd gathered around

his umbrella, to come forward and welcome me. With the effusive ostentation that is intended to express sincere cordiality, he pulled out a crocodile-skin cigar case, and, selecting two golden-banded smokes with consummate care, pressed them upon me. As I put them in an outside pocket, so that they might be stolen easily, I grasped his hand, and thanked him, and enquired how the daily scramble went.

Things had not prospered with him. He had been endeavouring to enrich himself and archæology at the same time by the manufacture of paleozoic relics, which he picked up by the bushel where the stone-masons were at work on some new villa-residences at Brondesbury, and after burying them with incantation in his back garden on a night when there was no moon, and leaving them there till they became discoloured, he grubbed them up again, and under the title of "Zuni skin-hatchets," or "Judean axe-heads," unloaded them on unsuspecting elderly enthusiasts with long hair and blue spectacles, who bore the derelict bits of building material away, and worshipped them as an Esquimaux does train-oil. Unfortunately, David overlooked a bit of an inscription in chalk that was upon a chunk of a Chaldean temple, and though it was only

one little old word of four letters, and might well have been inscribed in a devotional spirit, Dave completely failed to convince the old Burlington Street fogey, who had paid a big price for the thing, that the term was well known to the Chaldeans, and the old duffer made a police-court matter of it. For the second time in his career David Raphael donned the broad arrow, and now, he had come down to this—to skinning the gullibles and society's irreclaimables at a rowdy London horse-fair! He told me with all the confidence begotten of old friendship, that the game was a "soft thing" for him every time, if he only kept an eye peeled for the police. And David's eyes were always open: I do believe that, like the snakes, he had no eyelids, nothing but transparent epidermal envelopes, fixed, immovable.

But while he talked to me his crowd grew fidgety. The rustic pleasure-seeker who comes into the fair by the first train in the morning reckons that when he isn't absolutely on the jump he is losing valuable time. David's umbrella full of envelopes, with the tops of the capital letters peeping artlessly out, were well enough to give a fillip to the indolent curiosity of the passer-by, but it needed something more to keep his atten-

The while the countryman ran his eye over the assorted envelopes, and paused between the only two letters with uniformly conical tops, Raphael gave elaborate manifestations of all the conflicting emotions between joy and despair, and when at last the yokel made his choice and picked up an envelope, David craned his rubber neck alarmingly, so as to catch sight of the bottom of the selected letter at the same moment as his customer. Not that the fellow drew the card quite out. He pulled it just far enough from the folds to satisfy his own curiosity, and then threw it down. At the same time Raphael yelled out, just as though a great burden had been lifted from his shoulders—

“Well, well, well! may I die, he’s missed it!”

So terribly in earnest was he, that the crowd, though sympathising with the one of its number that had been done, was sensibly impressed. It gave David barely time to shuffle and re-arrange his envelopes before it pressed forward another visual expert with a half-dollar to lose. Again and again, up to the seventh time, it essayed to find the fifteenth letter of the alphabet, but always failed, and then, one by one, it slunk away. As it did so, David gathered his envelopes up and closed the umbrella, preparatory to moving

to a fresh pitch, for you cannot keep raising new crops on the old soil.

" It ain't really five to one ag'inst 'em findin' it," he said to me with a chuckle, " it's fifty million to one ag'inst 'em every time! "

I asked him why.

" Lord love me! I should ha' thought *you* would ha' guessed it," he replied, " why, both the O's is Q's when you pull 'em out! "

THE DEMOLITION OF DOOK'S PLACE

MUCH problematical information is from time to time thrust upon me, as the worthy magistrate observed, when the fair defendant who had bashed the night-cabman in the jaw, "described herself as an actress," but as the Israelitish gent, who sat peeling prawns by the side of the fly-driver on the box-seat, persisted in discussing the matter in shouts with his kinsman who shared the hind cushion with me, I had willy-nilly to hear all there was to hear about the proposed demolition of Duke's Place, Houndsditch, and the driving forth of the residents of that aristocratic locality. It was one of the pleasing penalties of a two-bob-all-are-welcome-fly-ride between Richmond and Hurst Park, and, ever ready to add to my stock of worldly knowledge by lending a collective ear, the narrative was as welcome as was the sweet, gentle tune which the summer breeze was whistling to the yellow wheat

—grateful, appreciative wheat, that bobbed and nodded its many heads to keep time to the zephyrs' music.

"Really, sir," remarked my cushion-mate, dragging me into the discussion, "one by one they're a-doin' away with all the interestin'est old lan' marks in London, ain't they? Look at that 'istorical old bit be'ind the north side o' Fleet Street: Dr Johnson's old carser has been swep' away, an' what is there, let me arst yer, that's got any romance or int'rest about it—bar, of course, the Albert Club? But, lor, bless yer 'art, if you're goin' to talk about clubs, what price the old clubs in Dook's Place?"

"Old Sol Bergmann's!" prompted the prawn-peeler on the box.

"Accha Nebbish! Old Sol Bergmann's!" asserted my right-hand Hebrew, evidently with keen relish for the recollection. "And yet, mind yer, Old Sol—Uncle Sol as everybody called 'im—never could ha' done as he did if Dook's Place hadn't been abserlootly *the* sportin' centre o' the East End!"

"That's so," chimed in the sportsman on the front seat.

"They was sportsmen in Dook's Place from the time they was B'rmitzvah, sir; if a boy

couldn't read cards thro' the backs by the time he was thirteen, special prayers was said for him! And sich keen players they was, too. Why, they got me into a game one night, an' they 'readied' the 'ands quicker than Hell could scorch a feather on a windy night. Oh, it *was* thick! I tell you, if a man wanted to spit, he 'ad to spit on the table. If he'd ha' turned his head to do it, he'd have 'ad four aces to beat—cert! I reckon as old Sol couldn't ha' *lived* without a pack of broads. If he couldn't find anybody to play with him, he'd play alone, an' I'll never forget the night I saw him on his lonesome, a-settin on the end o' the pier at Brighton, playin' Patience by himself. He was waitin' for the wind to blow a King from the top of a nine that he wanted for his third suit! Oh, he *was* a 'spieler! Whilst as for race-'orses, why Manny Bendet's little boy—he was on'y eleven years old, sir——"

"Ten an' eight months," corrected the man on the box.

"Ten an' eight months, then—when he could trace back the pedigree of every race-'orse that ever was foaled since Waxy was a two-year-old, an' bein' put on his mettle once at a Brismelah party, may I die if he didn't trace Gang Forward back to the sire of Balaam's ass!"

"He was a fair take-down," ejaculated the prompter, wagging his head from side to side in sheer admiration.

"Not dead, I hope?" I ventured.

"No fear, he ain't," cried the anecdotal Red Sea pedestrian warmly; "he's packin' up a parcel in Johannesburg—and *what* a parcel! Dead? No Dook's place-r ever dies, 'ceptin' in the height of affluence an' Sutherland Avenoo! They're too 'ot to die; Sheol could show 'em nothing! An' as to the fraternal feelin' amongst 'em—why, Freemasonry's a blind kitten to it! I calls to mind a risin' young 'Place-r'—Izzy Beldola his name was—who 'ad long been a bit of a mystery to the neighbours. All Jews goes racin' a good deal, but they gene'lly hayes some sort o' business to come back to—cigar-makin', tailorin', fruit, or di'monds. *One* o' the gardens—Covent or 'Atton—is pretty sure to know something about 'em, but they didn't about Izzy Beldola. Yet he always seemed to 'ave plenty o' geldt, the aristocratistest cut o' clothes that ever come out o' the Poultry, an' smoked cigars that certainly wasn't built in Mile End. Well, one Saturday night late—when all the Yiddisher aristocracy was back from the Theatres and settled down to *chemin de*

fer in old Sol Bergmann's club—in strolls Izzy Beldola. He punts at the 'chemmy' for awhile, till presently he chucks down a new florin that had no more 'ring' in it than a kid's lead nicker. Old Sol Bergmann was on to it like a cat on to a mouse; with one swift grab he'd got the shlenter!

"Izzy," he says, slowly and seriously, as he fixes his old grey eyes on Beldola, as though he could pin him with 'em to the opposite wall, "you oughter be d——d well ashamed o' yerself!"

Beldola's face was crimson. He was too confused an' flabbergasted to say much, but he grasped old Uncle Sol's hand nervously, and stammered out something imploring an' penitent.

"You're a d——d disgrace, sir," again said the old man, never taking his eyes off the miserable culprit. "Not only is there no ring in the coin, but you've handled your mould so carelessly that the milled edges don't go evenly; bring 'em round—every one of 'em—to me to-morrow mornin', an' I'll see if we can make 'em passable on my lathe!"

AT SUCCOTH

*An epistle addressed by Mr Moses Benrimo, of
Bevis Marks, to his Nephew in Johannesburg,
on the eve of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

MY DEAR CHUDAH,

I dessay you rememper
dot case of de olt lady vhat set in de pit at
de bantomime an' vhas so shocked at de
harlekervin an' his columpine, don't ye?
Anyvay, first of all de columpinc t'rew herselluf
packwards into de harlekervin's arms, an' he
planted a kiss on 'er lips, whilst he tickled the
sole of 'er left shoe; den she shprang up an'
palanced herself on his vishpone while he
t'rew her a kiss in de air, an' so it vent on
till at las' de olt lady held up her Baisley shawl
in vront of her face, an' exglaims out loud:
"Vell, vell, vell, all I can say is, dat I hope
dey're married!" And, up to a year ago, dot
vhas de ghief anxiety of all Bevis Marks vit'
regard to little Ray Felix, now Mrs Solly

Oppenheim. Vhell, notwithstanding that ve all thought when they spent their honeymoon at a blace called Nantymohel it vhas a delicate hint that they didn't intend to have no family, they made their first Brismelah a month ago, an' the 'ole affair vhas vun run o' shlemozzles from shtart to finish. I begun to think it 'ud nefer come orf—there vhas so many upsets o' vun kind and another. Vhat vith the geurister vantin' to gif the paby laughin' gas; a vrient of Solly's, a low pullach collectin' offerins for the Society in a sardine tin, an' a Goyisher nussmaid a-callin' the mohel "ole quarter o' brisket, cut thin," whilst she subsekervently vent and buzzed me for a bit o' shinus yhat vhas in my ofercoat pocket vhen I 'anded it to her to be 'ung up; may I take a miesa down the shteps o' the shool if it vhas there vhen I got the ofercoat pack again! And yow did she 'and it me—a 'olden' of it at arms' length from 'er vith Morry's fire-tongs; I gif you my vord, if it hadn't peen as I'm so friendly vith Solly, an' known his fam'ly efer since I've bin in practice, I'd a said something to her as vould a put 'er considerin' cap on.

It vhas a peautiful child, tho', and, t'rough nothink short of a daylight roppery, run second in the Yiddisher Veight-for-Age Bapy Show,

held in Commercial Road East, last veek. And all t'rough the vinner, a pug-nosed kid vith all his limbs as shtraight as a gun-barrel bein' brought to be veighed vith a great big heavy pair o' leg-irons on for a shlenter. They never scaled less than three pounds and a 'arf, by my gezondt. It's dishgraceful!

Pontius Hobinstock give hisself a nice showin' up last Shobbas night, by my blessed gezondt. Ye know ve all goes and sphiels now an' again in a little publican's back kitchen, vhat shpiels hisself sometimes, 'specially vhen he's shikkur. He thinks he plays better vhen he's shikkur; plays vith more confidence! Vell, vell, live and let live, says I. Vell, ve'd been playin' bluff all the evenin', and the poor public-house shlemiel had done in all the prewers' geldt, an' vhas a mor'gagin' the beer-engine to Louis Larzareth to pay for a seekvence flush as he hadn't got, 'nd sayth I, "Don't ye think ith time ve give over fur the night?" "So help me never, I do," sayth the lantlordt; considerin' as Lou Larzareth, who needn't a-been as mean as *that*, had commenced a-takin' down the beer-engine, just a-cos he'd lent a couple o' couter on it—"All right," I sayth, "give over." Then ve all counts up our vinnins, and, vilst ve're a-doin'

of it, Pontius shouts out, "Here, servelp me, what's this?—somepody's run in two. 'Anover Jacks on me!" Ve never sayth a vord; none of uth. Pontius kicks up a great gershrei. "Vhen I sith down to play here," sayth he, "I conthiderth I'm thitting vith 'onest men and gentlemen. I shvear I'll find out vhat thief there ith in the room v hath done this. George, ith it *you?*"

"No, I'll swear it ain't," cries the publican.

"You wouldn't suthpect me o' sich a thing?" sayth I.

"Nor me," sayth Judah Cohen.

"Vell it mutht be vun of yer," sayth Pontius, "'cos there's on'y two others playin'—me and my brother—an' he wouldn't do it—*leastways, not vithout tellin' me arterwards, an' he ain't said a vord!*"

By the vay, Chudah, dere's a independent fortune to be picked up by de man dat invent a brocess for makin' shpielin' cards vaterproof. Why? Vell, no schorum, I tell ye. Ve found a mug the other nicht—not the publican vhat shpiels best vhen he's shikkur, but a shlemiel o' kvite another colour. He vhas a surgical instrument-maker's son, an' as Solly Josephs (vhat shtood in the cut-up) said: "No matter if it ain't all ready geldt, ye can take a instrymment or

two sich as a scalpel or a bist'ry, you can always turn *them* into gelt in *our* relitchion." Even a few button-'ooks vould a sold to the froom, as is frekvently troupled vith makin' Halitza. It yhas a Sunday nicht, the Goyus's shobbas 'nd ve three, me, Solly Josephs, and "Sugar" Cohen all a-shlenterin' ve vhos Goyim, 'appens to meet the young chentleman a-valkin' round the duck's mickvah in de Rechent's Bark 'nd vinkin' at the shiksa's. "Good ev'nin," I says, shmoosin' I knew 'im, "did ye vin yer money at Leicester?" says I; and that opened up a ackvaintance. Ve walks all the efenin' till the pubs shut at elefen, 'nd then "Sugar" (who's a new 'and at the shpielung mossamotten, 'n not like efer to make a yurkman either) says, "Come an' 'ave a glass up in my rooms in Dorset Street?" Ve all goes—by mine and yours, vhat a vunder 'n "Sugar" pokes the fire, 'n vheels out the creen-gloth taple, 'n says, "Vhat d'ye say to make jest vun pank?" I says, "I nefer gample, Mister Cowen"—ve alays gif 'im the *ow* for it when ve're vith the Goyus; it's more chenteel an' not so peastly Yiddisher. "Vell," he says, "ye don't suppose I vant to vin *your* money. Play for farthin's." "For *my* part," ses I, "send to the gornchandler's 'nd play for locusts." Erventually

it's arranced ve're to shtart with a drei bob bank; Solly takes the bank. I see "Sugar" a-vurryin' apout, an' I vhispers, "Vhat d'ye vant?" "All right," ses he, "I'm a-goin' to gif 'im someting to dringk; he ain't game enough to blunge yet." He gits out some dringk; he says; "'Ere, sir, 'low me to ofrer yer a dringk. Raisin vine 'nd potash," says "Sugar." "Ain't yer got nothink else?" says the young chentleman. "Yuth, some rum and soda," says "Sugar." Vhell, he says he'll 'ave that, as there ain't nothink else, 'nd "Sugar" pours out some rum. Here comes the shlemozzle—jest as ye vhas all retty to get a pit, vith Solly a-bankin' an' having tied a tephillin bag roundt him, to "get it" in—"Sugar" opens the soda. Acha Nebbish! He lets the gork vly, an' shpurts the soda all ofrer the little creen-gloth taple, an' you *should* ha' seen those shpielin' cards! As soon as the vet touched 'em they rolled and they gurlled up like Katzenyammers' Kosher Jumbles on a Aruv Pasach, an' vhat didn't roll and gurl up shtuck all together as though they'd a been coated vith glue. They vhas rooind; shpoilt to pap. Ve tried to write out a pack vith some old returning'-thanks-for-shivva-visits-cards 'nd a ben and ingk, but even vhen they vhas done ve couldn't vurk

vith 'em, 'nd so didn't get anythink—not efen a speccerlum or a putton-'ook!

'Ave ye 'eard apout 'Arris Jacob's a puyin' Golt Mine Shares? No? Ah, ye should! Ye know vhat a born shlemiel 'Arris always vhas—I always said it vhas along of not 'avin enough for minyan at the brismelah—and now he's gone in for speculatin'. It come about like this: 'Arris vhas a valkin' throo 'Atton Garden when he meets old Yussuf Volfenhawser. "Ach Yussuf, vas machts du?" "Y'alright. I'm tryin' shtili kouf myself." "Vhat you know?" "Vhy, I'm toldt the Menasseh ben Matseer Mine is goot goots. Dey're grushing dis month, 'nd de shares 'll rise sure." "Yussuf, I puy some o' dem shares vor a rise." Vhell, he runs off to the orfice o' the Gompany 'nd he sees the manager. "Gutt morgen, sir," says he, "vhat's the price o' shares?" "Forty-nine sellers, forty-eight puyers," says the manager. "Ne kauten ze mier, ein hondred." He pays his ready geldt, and goes pack to Yussuf. "Ich hob gekauft Menasseh's und bazalled 49s." "Mozzeltoff," says Yussuf, "you vill mach geldt—the least ten schilling by the end o' the month." Vell, them shares used to keep 'im avake all nichts. They vorried him so he proke off vith his chollah. At the end

o' the month he puy sa *Financial Times*, and turns to the reports. "Menasseh's crushed 550 ounces gold!" He rushes off to Yussuf: "You vhas kvite right, my poy; what shall I do now?" "Sell," says Yussuf. He's in a great gerschvindt to get to the city; at last he sees the manager. "Vhat brice *now?*" says he. "Vell," says the manager, "they're down, sellers forty, buyers thirty-nine." "Veepin' Rachel!" says 'Arris; "why, I read in the paper as you'd grushed fife hondred fifty ounces, yet shares goes down?" "Vhell, don't yer see," says the manager, "*there's all that goldt less in the mine!*"

Sufferin' Lazarus! he'd nefer thought o' that. It vhas awful 'ard 'avin to sell 'em pack at a ten schillin' loss; but vhat 'urt 'im more vhas 'aving to pay brokerage!

Pore 'Arris, mine's the 'eart to feel for him, for, kervite petveen ourselves, Chudah, I've chust dropped a shmall intependency myself, an' over—vhat d'ye t'ink—foot-racin'! Ye remember little Dave Moss, vhat used to vin all dem amateur cups at de Pow Groundts? Vhell, he come to me six weeks ago, an' he says; "Ach, guv'nor, I see as 'ow de coalies up at Cardiff is gettin' up a big race for novices," says Dave. "De on'y conditions is dot strangers an' visitors

has to give 'em fifty yards in a mile—(they must fancy theirselves a bit!)—an', whilst de stake 'ud do me a bit o' good, you might back me for a vinter's keep, 'specially if you ain't landed it over the Siezerwitch an' Cambridge. Now are *you* game to stand de exes for *me* to go down dere—say, as a hawker of 'airpins an' praces an' collar studs, an' things—an' cop dis pot?" "Dave," says I, "if ye mean goin' skervare, dere's always money to pack yer in Mo Penrimo's kick." "If I don't," says Dave, "may I nefer kiss de Shobbas Guyer again; is dot good enough?" an' as you may pe sure, Chudah, I pulls out two quid to go on vith, an' appoints to go down to Cardiff vith him nex' mornin'.

It bein' a Saturday evenin' when ve enters Vales, Dave gets out at a little station about a mile short o' the town, so's to enter it by the road with his pox o' vares slung be'ind 'im—a sort o' Yiddisher minstrel poy, by the way, barrin' that his "wild 'arp" was wash-leathers, an' his "father's sword" was 'arf a gross o' fifty-bladed penknives. Vell, by my directions, he rents a little pedroom in a pack street, rests hissself all day, an' of a evenin' drops into the pubs where most o' the coalies is to be found. He makes it a point to show 'em all his novelties, an' is

very p'rticklar always to valk vith a bit of a limp, as if he vhas rocky on the plates. He's always got a joke an' a bit o' chootspa' for 'em, has Dave, an' vhenefor they gits extra merry he sings 'em that old thing as Mo 'Art used to do at de Bazaar, "The Ammy Knife." Dey likes that, 'cos it's a bit chootspatik, and dey gits to take a bit of a int'rest in Dave too. Vell, finally, it's arranged that Dave shall run in the big race, startin' vith a few other visitors at scratch. Dere's one or two little bookies there as lays eights an' tens, an' don't you think I don't 'elp meself to some of it, too! Dere's a good bit o' stuff goes on a fellow as we ain't seen, the "Unknown from Tenby"; but as we 'ear he's on'y a miner, we don't get very anxious about 'im.

The day o' the race comes round, an' a clorious day it is—that is, as far as de veather's concerned. Every collier in Cardiff, with his missus an' his kids, is there, dressed out like buck-rats at a terrier's funeral. Preparations is made for de pig race, an' a rare long time's spent in gettin' the men on the mark. The "Tenby Unknown" is a little veedy pit of a cove, thinks I, for a collier, an' he was as plack as the coal in the seam; I shouldn't think he'd washed hissself for a month. At last the pistol

fires, an' avay they goes. First fifty yards they're all in a bunch; den de beer begins to tell. As they pass the half-mile post there's only two in it; de "Unknown from Tenby" is leading Dave by about forty yards. Thinks I to meself, this is all right; Dave can go up to 'im when he wants to. But, may I die! he couldn't. Vhenefer Dave put on a spurt, so did the Unknown. Vell, Dave could see me a gesticulating to 'im, so he makes a desperit effort, and races up to within thirty yards o' the black 'un, though, py now, de black 'un was nearly 'ome. Then, as they passes me on the run in, you could ha' knocked me down with a feather as I heard the "Unknown from Tenby" shout at Dave:

"Shemor Beni, Dave, ye vant's a bit more chochum to play a good shlemiel!"

It vhas Mo Fisher—Mo Fisher all a-covered in coal dust! Mo Fisher vhat ven de Cocoa Cup against all East London, an' could give terventy yards in a hunderd to anything as ever vo're a arbah-kanfos! An' ve found out arterwards as de plighter 'ad been a vurkin' in de coal mines for six veeks, so's to get dot fifty yards allowance!

I've 'ardly de 'eart to rite more, though I'm bound to tell yer as de Beth Din has fined Jakey

Trenner ten shillin's for sellin' a man a twopenny cigar on the shobbas. The man as smoked the cigar has recovered, else Jakey would a got it hotter.

Yer Aunt Beckie an' me joins in affectionate good wishes to all, Chudah, an' I remains, as ol
old,—

YER UNGLE,

MO.

THE TRAGIC END OF GOODIE TWO-SHOES

TWENTY years of tireless observation brings me to the conclusion that the average Hebrew of the lower middle class who applies himself seriously to the business of backing horses invariably manages to accumulate three changes of diamond shirt-studs, and the double chins of opulence in from five to three years of his side Galway's beginning to turn grey; but from all intellectual standards Isaac Goodman, better known on the race-course as "Little Goodie Two-Shoes," was below the average. Though under the Yiddisher middle age — which is fifty — he bore the imprints of the feet of forty crows upon the skin at the outer corners of his eyes, and the numberless lines that furrowed up his face might have been photographed for a lunatic's bird's-eye impression of the rails at Rugby Junction. Slightly bent in the back, he invariably carried his left hand

behind him, whilst with his right he leant upon an ash-plant—an attitude peculiar to music-hall delineators of the aged negro as he never was or will be. Let me put a little emphasis upon Goodie's leaning upon his stick. Getting about was a matter of considerable difficulty to him, for he had more corns, bunions, and enlarged toe-joints than Mr Alcock had ever catalogued, whilst old-standing rheumatism had left him a legacy in the shape of an odd twist that had brought his two heels together, and turned his toes outward in a meritorious imitation of the hands of Big Ben when at a quarter to three, or, again, at fifteen minutes past nine.

In the days before his rheumatism caused his pedal extremities to "ruck" on him Goodman had been called "Goodie," but when the changed gait, and the hobble, and the slashed old boots became painfully permanent, the kindly commentator of the course of that past day, Mr Walter Laburnum, tacked on the "Little" and the "Two-Shoes," and the new name stuck.

Goodie was a dead shnorrer, dyed in the wool, and he never understated the evils that oppressed him. The ordinary cadger besetting the approach to the railway at the end of the day's racing generally states simply that he's

broke, and then leaves the rest to your generosity. Goodie never let it be at *that*! As he shambled along beside you, rattling off his woes in an agonised undertone, you gathered that he'd lost every bet he'd had during the day, got punched in the jaw by mistake by a book-maker's minder, upset out of a trap coming back from the course, and had his ticket sneaked whilst lying in the road; and, as if all this were not enough, he'd just been bitten through the dress-improver by an organ-grinder's monkey, "outside of 'Arry Taggs, just afore you come along." How could you withhold a shilling?

His beggarly impecuniosity notwithstanding, it was an evil day for Goodie when he threw in his lot with Ben Simmons, for Ben Simmons was a regular social blister. Ben was a real bad egg; still Goodie in his helplessness felt in sore need of a prop and partner, and Simmons was badly in want of a foil. For though he had all the assurance that was needed to jump up in the ring with only eighteenpence in his pocket, and lay three ponies to one against the favourite in running, he lacked somebody—anybody big enough to hold a betting book—to remain on the pitch and be torn limb from limb by an infuriated mob after the favourite had just got

up in the last stride, and he himself was on his way to the next county.

There came a fateful day's end at Hurst Park when, by a series of curious mischances, Simmons and his aged partner left off absolutely rapless. They had not between them the price of a single railway ticket back to "the smoke," and all they sought to borrow from responded with a refusal or a lie. So out upon the road that runs past Dick Dunn's stronghold they turned—that woeful road which the local authorities are wont to repair by strewing it with irregular stones, ranging in size from that of the tomtit's egg to Doctor Parker's head—and trudged laboriously along in the direction of Hampton Court. Their only beacon was the outside chance of their reaching Tagg's Hotel, or Johnnie Mayo's, in time to pross on some laggard pal for a "sip o' Ramsgate," and then—over the Bridge, through Bushey Park to London.

As night joined her flats over the sleepy riparian hamlet of Isleworth, the brace of leg-weary Israelites entered her market square, and gazed with hopes not quite extinguished for the possible lamp of a casual ward. But all was dark—dark as Egypt.

"By my gezundt!" observed Simmons, exhausted

"de prodigal son vit' his goat-skin pants an' everlastin' pine-nut diet ain't in it vit' this! May I die, Goodie, but I wouldn't mind to do a bit o' dental vork on a stone-pile to-morrer mornin' for a casual doss to-night. Hey?"

Goodie Two-Shoes only emitted a groan—he was past all badinage. A rod or so ahead the last shop remaining open threw a flood of gas-light across the uneven roadway. It was one of those Italian ice-cream and chop-and-fried-potato joints, with the stereotyped window display of gallon beakers of lemon julep, chocolate rolling-pins with "Menier" on them, and a marching battalion of Worcester-sauce bottles. Simmons no sooner saw it than his plan of action was conceived and framed. With a rough injunction to his aged companion to "buck up and face the music," he strode along till he reached the shop.

Deeds, not words, win the world. Without hesitating an instant, lest the extremely unlikely contingency of his mind changing should arise, Simmons walked into the ice-cream shop, and, as a spring bell fixed over the door rang out the notification of his entry, a big, good-looking, copper-coloured young woman came out from a parlour at the back of the counter. Her quiet dress of black could not conceal her nationality.

To the artistic eye she would have looked all the prettier with a folded cloth upon her head, with a necklace of big gold beads about her throat, and a coarse white chemise triumphing over an abbreviated stay-bodice. These, with a black skirt, a blue apron, and hobnailed, rusty-brown highlows, would have brought Eyre Street Hili to Isleworth; but to-night Teresa was disguised.

"Bong svar!" said Simmons, as she came towards him, "vhat apoud de Seenyore Frangpani, Missie. Is he in?"

Evidently none too assured by this assortment of dialects, the maiden answered:

"Ah no, he ees out-doors."

"Ay be-ang," continued Benjamin, adding, "'an vhat apoud de Seenyore Spaghitti—is *he* in?"

"Ah no, also *he* is out-doors," she replied; and somehow the information seemed to please Simmons amazingly.

"Vell, look 'ere, mio caro," he went on, "jes' go 'an put us on eight chops, vith fried pertaters, a couple o' bundles o' grass——"

"A whatta, sare?"

"Grass," explained Ben, "sparrer-grass. Ain't yer got none?"

"Ah no," she said, shaking her head bewitchingly.

"Then I s'pose ve'll 'ave to do vidout it,' muttered Benjamin; "any'ow, go an' put the chops an' the pertaters on, there's a dear."

With that the precious pair sat down, and the girl disappeared.

"Goodie, old man," observed Mr Simmons, as he helped himself to a bumper of cherry brandy in a stone tea-cup, and, by way of making a start, picked up a brownish cake—something like a bed-key covered with chocolate—and proceeded to munch it, "life ain't in 'oldin' the biggest cards, but in playin' a poor 'and well. That's towrah, ain't it? 'Ere, 'ave a drop o' this yere cordial?"

Did ever chops taste as these eight did? Could Monico himself have fried potatoes better? Assuredly not.

"I kin 'ardly believe, Ben," said Goodie, as he finished picking the last bone, and caught up a would-be-friendly black kitten to wipe his greasy fingers on, "I kin 'ardly believe as ve 'aven't backed every vinner on the day; if ve 'ad, ve couldn't ha' done ourselves no better!"

Simmons only smiled with conscious superiority. As he removed the grease from *his* hands by a self-invented process of rubbing them together

and over and over one another, he grinned the grin of the man who has given a good dinner, and observed :

“An’ *now*, vhat should ye say, Goodie, if ve vas to vind up by a-backin’ a *real* vinner?”

“An’ vhat vould that be?” enquired Goodie, with all the density of the benefited.

Simmons looked around a little as he leaned forward, and said quietly :

“The *till*, Goodie, vhat’s the matter vith the till?”

Teresa must have been listening to her customers, for at this point she came suddenly into the shop, her great eyes wide open with undisguised apprehension.

“Anytinka more, sare?” she asked.

“Vell, yes, there is,” said Ben, smiling his sweetest; “vhat should ye say if I vas to *kiss* yer?”

Her eyes were large enough at all times, but they opened far wider than usual at Simmons’ words. For an instant she looked him up and down like an infuriated tigress; then her commercial instinct gained a temporary mastery. She shrugged her shoulders, and forced a smile, and said :

“Ah no, no fooleeshness, sare. Paya your bill—no keess.”

But Benjamin was not the sort of gallant to be restrained by a mere maid's disinclination. Besides, he had grown so used to the artificial repulses of the olive-skinned girls of the Ghetto, amongst whom he was accounted a perfectly outrageous darling, that feminine rebuffs only served to egg him on. He got up from the table, crossed the shop floor in a couple of strides, and made an ineffectual attempt to enclose the alien beauty in his arms. Herein he failed. She dodged behind a hinged flap in the counter and closed it down behind her.

"No sare, no sare, you must notta do zat," said she, temporising from her ambush, "paya your bill and go, or else——"

"Vell, or else vhat?" cried Ben, taking up her words.

"Oh," said she, stopping herself with a short, pretty laugh, "eet is no a-mattar eef you paya your bill. Please to-a do."

But Ben wanted that veiled threat explaiined. So, dropping the love-making like a red-hot rivet, he became suddenly transformed into a bully.

"Let's 'ear about dis 'or else' business," he demanded. "Vhat d'ye mean you'll do, 'or else'?"

"I a-mean," said the girl, vith an amount

of firmness that showed her grasp on the serious turn affairs had taken, "that eef you do not paya your bill and a-stop dees foolcsness—vell, I s'all call up Joh."

Simmons simply roared with laughter. He fancied himself with his fists in any rough-and-tumble, and had graduated amongst the human scum that fight with bottles. He knew too, where to bite a man to hurt him most; so that the idea of taking on the pretty Roman's "Joh" was beer and skittles and sixpenny smokes to him.

"Jes' call up this champion o' the macaroni middle-veights," cried Benjamin pleasantly, when his laughter had somewhat subsided; "call 'im up, you ——! an' I'll make him vish his mudder 'ad bin a boy."

As he spoke, he grabbed the girl's left arm in his left fist, as though he meant to strike her, in his hold, but she managed to wriggle to where the ring of a trap-door glistened in the flooring. In an instant she had raised the trap and called down, three times—

"Joh! Joh! JOH!"

And, verily and truly—*up* "*JOH*" came!

First there was heard his stertorous breathing, as though ascending ladders was work that didn't altogether suit him, then appeared his head and

shoulders, and finally he stood upon the scantling around the hole in the floor, in all his ursine majesty, a—magnificent buff-brown bear!

For an instant he stood there, oscillating like an inverted pendulum, rocking to and fro; a mighty metronome without the “tic-tac, tic-tac.” It is a favourite trick among the bears, and Joh had been practising it all day. His little beady eyes shifted from Simmons to Goodman, and Goodman to Simmons, and he smelt stronger than a gallon of ammonia.

As Joh took his first giant stride across the floor, Simmons tore open the shop door and fled; but Goodman was not able. White as a virgin’s winding-sheet, he stood transfixed to the boards, till the huge bear, in its second stride, closed its hairy forearms around him, and hugged him to its breast.

Goodie was not *quite* dead when the bear relaxed its hold and dropped him, but his vital spark flickered and petered out as he was being carried on a shutter to the nearest surgery, and the surgeon bound the corpse with blind tape to keep the crushed skeleton within together for the *post-mortem*; whilst Joh was rewarded with a stale scone-cake which the flies had blown beyond

the saleable point, and, feeling that only a thin sheet of paper remained between heaven and himself, he backed down into his cellar like a good bear, to go a-playing at being a metronome again.

A PURELY SPORTING BIT

IN our own particular little combination of bright particular City sportsmen, using the bar of the "Woolpack," we'd always fought a bit shy of a certain Sam Solomons. Not that anybody in the little coterie had ever proclaimed Sam a sharp, but language was invented for the purpose of concealing the thoughts, and the utterly irrelevant eloquence into which prudent men strayed when asked how far Sam might be regarded as a person of strict integrity, was something quite a field ahead of yours-for-the-belt.

There are plenty of men going about London who, without being actual swindlers, stand pretty high in the sleuth industry, and Sam kept his corner of the fabric elevated, it seemed to *my* dull comprehension, by enticing the unwary into useless arguments about which they would subsequently bet. The leisure hours which others

employed—profitably, let us hope—in pondering over the future state, Sam squandered in calculating precisely how much liquid the new water-bottles at the “Palmerston” held, or how the girth of the cheese at “Simpson’s” might be ascertained by training the nude eve up and down a foot-rule.

And yet we stood him.

Such is the overweening vanity of man, or men, that we not only stood him, but many of us betted with him, paid up cheerfully when we lost, and were even too polite to groan at him when he told us the venerable story of what the rude man said to the three old women in the train—and told it as having happened to himself, too!

One afternoon last autumn seven of us met in a bar, and made one more endeavour to discuss the weather—and still have a pure heart. Somewhere about 3.15 a rumour started that it had left off raining, but it was erroneous. It had only paused to spit on its hands, as it were, and get a fresh grip. As soon as I had rolled up and buttoned the umbrella left in the decoy-jar in my hall by the gent who came to estimate for connecting my bath-room with “the main,” I went to the door and found it was pouring harder

than ever. As I rejoined the junta, Samuel came out with the very unusual proposition :

“Why not change the venue? What’s the matter with one for the worms at Birch’s?”

There were no dissenters ; did anybody know of a good and sufficient reason he certainly smothered it, and the procession started. Traversing a honeycomb of courts and alleys, we came presently to a poulterer’s shop, within which, at a wooden bench, a young man in a blue flannel apron was intruding his right hand—very rudely I thought—upon the interior private arrangements of a murdered cockerel. Catching sight of us as he withdrew his fist, full of crimson and purple organs, he called out :

“Poultry’s cheap to-day, gentlemen ; what can I show you?”

“I was looking at this goose,” replied the Solomonic Samuel, pointing to a particularly fine bird that hung in solitary splendour amidst a lot of black game, and a few wild rabbits. Then Sam turned to us and remarked, with an air of conviction, “It’s a devilish fine bird, eh?”

We agreed, more or less disinterestedly, that it *was* a devilish fine bird.

“Now what,” began Sam, “would a bird like that weigh?”

While the young man in the shop hastily wiped his gory hands on a sort of all-purpose cloth, and dabbed the cockerel's blushing breast with a string mop besmeared with flour, we weakly made guesses at the weight of the goose. Taking a bit of a line from the poundage of a healthy child at birth, I started the bird at ten pounds, but was laughed at. Billy Wingfield, who's about as good a judge of avoirdupois as an emu is of Mozufferpore rice averages, went two better. One by one, to cut the story short, we got the goose as high as sixteen pounds, whereupon Sam, turning abruptly on the last guesser—Charlie Merren, of the Wool Exchange—offered to bet a fiver and post it with a third person, that the goose pulled down the scale at twenty pounds, if not a little more!

Men must work and women must weep; or rather, men *must* bet, and Charlie, to whom a fiver was of little consequence, took Samuel on. The two notes were handed to a disinterested guesser, and the young man in the blue flannel apron unhooked the gander. He carried it into the shop, and we all followed to see it scaled, and—well, just then, as Mr Haggard says, a strange thing happened.

The little half-glazed door of the shop-parlour opened, and the proprietor of the shop appeared

He was a bit of a sport, besides being a poulterer, and all the betting men in the city knew him.

"Whadder they want, Swain?" he asked his shopman, scenting a possible practical joke.

"Mr Solomons wants to know the weight o' this goose, sir," replied the assistant.

"Gor' bless me 'art, what's yer game?" cried the poulterer, addressing himself to Solomons; "this ain't Carlsbad, an' that goose ain't Bantin', an', as it ain't lost no flesh since you 'ad it weighed this mornin', it's *still* twenty pound an' five ounces!"

A mighty significant silence followed the poulterer's burst. Then a smile, full of meaning, went round. Then Charlie Merren, who was one of the best men in his day that the Belsize ever turned out, grabbed Sam Solomons by the collar, and led him into George Yard. Merren never put his foot down without something being heard to bust; but, in this instance, he didn't put it down; it kept on rising, and Solomons kept stopping it with that portion of his anatomy where the Simian is supposed to terminate and the narrative to commence, and that night Samuel's forfeited fiver was sent to the treasurer of the Almshouses for Aged and Infirm Trussers and Duck Stuffers at Ball's Pond.

CASH TAILORING

WITH the Talmudic ordination ever before his eyes that the righteous man shall achieve his daily bread without getting in a perspiration, it is not astonishing that so many strict Jews have turned attention to the classic art of cash tailoring, and elevated the same to the level of the sciences. Once upon a time that wonderful street, known to the vulgar as Petticoat Lane, had the whole business on a string, but the soulless, unsentimental Streets Improvement Act, or whatever they call it, has largely broken up the little colony of merchant-tailors, and to-day it is only here and there that you come across (presumably) a house, draped from cornice to kerbstone with coats, and waistcoats, and—er—"so on's," as the Lord Bishop of Hereford would say.

Oh, but they were wonderful shops, and the fact that only a tithe of their once large number now remains is a mournful one to the lover of old memories. I rejoice, however, that Old

Solomon Wolf & Sons still have their den there; indeed I do declare that I myself would go down and buy some new clothes of them (which Heaven knows I need!), but as I no longer attend dog-fights I should have few opportunities of doing the duds full justice.

The guileless Gentile stranger, halting in wondrous admiration on the threshold of the Wolfs' stronghold, might well be likened to a green and elementary rabbit dazzled by the beauty of the entrance to the wily canine's lair. The Wolfs were not mis-named.

Though the density of the ready-made-clobber foliage spreading all over the house-front effectually obscured any facia or signboard which may have existed, a thousand business cards, slightly and delicately tucked into the outer pockets of all the garments, proclaimed it the Wolfs' cave, inside of which the wild and ravenous pack, the progeny of various generations, lay low in sufficient strength to cope with any emergency.

It was the old, old Wolf who stood outside and, bandying honeyed words with the idling stranger, lured him in. Red Riding-Hood's wolf could talk, up to the three syllables of "grand-ma-ma," but, compared to him, old Sol Wolf

was an end-of-the-century harangue-outang. When once the joint allurements of the old man's lips and hands had landed you inside the den, there were six or seven who could handle you, according to your shape. The customer of sporting cut was taken on by Raphael—Raphy the *ruach*—while Solly the staid was better adapted to stick a stern-visaged buyer with a suit of shoddy. The nervous and the vacillating were an easy prey for any of the cubs, but the best results from the impressionable young man were always got by Miriam—Miriam with the great liquid eyes and the long, sinuous fingers, the very touch of which seemed to send an electrical thrill through cloth and lambswool. It is told (and, mark you, I would repeat no statement calculated to jar upon the nerves of the veracious) that once upon a time a dreamy-eyed young man was corralled in, and, being forthwith subjected to the rapid process of twotums-two aforesaid, was unanimously turned over to Miriam. So deeply did he sigh when the first volley of the artillery of her eyes struck him, that he could scarcely find the courage to tell her that he wished to be measured for an overcoat and a pair of trousers. Why these were all he needed I do not know: perhaps he was an actor

a-waiting the offer of a remunerative London engagement.

Anyway, when the beautiful Miriam, with tape-measure about her neck, remarked that she'd take his measure for the trousers first, and straightway began to unbutton his waistcoat, he blushed like a sugar-beet, and would probably have fled, had not her lissome fingers been already running all over him. So he simply closed his eyes and sighed again — sighed "Heigho! heigho!" quite prettily.

When Miriam's hands wandered around his body and met above his waist-buckle he snickered, and when her right hand went down his left leg and tickled him as it passed the kneepan, he wriggled like an eel. Altogether, the ordeal lasted several seconds.

"Now then for the coat," she said, and drew the lappels of the ulster he was wearing forward. But his hand, laid gently on her arm, restrained her. With eyes half open, as those of one unwilling to be awaked, he threw his coat open and remarked: "No, puss, no; to Heligoland with the Chesterfield: keep on measuring me for more trousers. I'll take—oh, forty-eight pairs of 'em!"

Such was the magic of Miriam's touch.

Now it fell upon a day soon after the Fast of Rubadub, or something, that a seafaring person hobbled down the lane—hobbled, be it explained, for the simple reason that he was shy of one leg. How or where he lost the limb is of small account, since seafaring persons generally—if we judge by those who squat in the wayside paths of Epsom and of Ascot—are supinely heedless of what becomes of their legs in their sea-service; anyway, his left lower limb was distinctly *non est*, as the sporting reporters say. The patriarchal Wolf was so busily employed just at the moment, forcing a small Gentile boy into a much smaller red plush Zouave jacket, to the murmured plaudits of the surrounding Hebrew crowd, that he did not immediately catch sight of the maimed mariner, who consequently fell into the hands of the Lessers, next door.

But Mo Lesser was not a Sol Wolf, by a very elongated piece of chalk. Indeed, so noisily did Lesser assail the navigator with his offer of “a peautiful ofercoat as I pought of a rear-admiral on’y yesterday,” that old Wolf, overhearing the words and scenting fresh quarry, hastily buttoned the half-suffocated boy into the jacket with a snap that may have fractured the

poor child's wish-bone, and pounced upon the new bait.

Solomon Wolf grabbed the seaman boldly by the arm, and peremptorily wrenched the mariner's coat-sleeve from the detaining thumb and fingers of Lesser, who let the hooked fish go, reluctantly, but without protest, to the acknowledged king of the street. For one and all admitted the supremacy of the elder Wolf, and, with one accord, agreed always to let him have first claim, since he could be safely depended upon in every case to strip the visitor to the ultimate halfpenny.

"Ofercoat, my vord, *ofercoat*!" chattered the old man half to himself and half to his prey, as he lugged the timber-heeled plougher of the raging main towards his sartorial lair, "'ow shall they sell a man goots vhat he shan't vant at all—on'y t'ink of it, a ofercoat vhen vhat he wants is a vun-legged pair o' drowseers."

Having by this time dragged the weather-beaten tar fairly into the shop, old Wolf cast an anxious look around, drew his son Raphael towards him, bade him snatch a good look at the customer, then rush upstairs, take a pair of blue serge trousers, cut one leg off high above the knee, run the mutilated receptacle

through the machine, and bring the altered garment down, and be mighty quick about it.

"Ach, my good vrient," the old man began, as Raphael scooted up the darkened staircase, "vhat a lucky t'ing that you shall come in 'ere to-day, 'stead o' goin' elsewhere to pe ropped and gheated. I no sooner a-see you a-comin' down de street den I calls to mind de Brince o' Vales a-visitin' de late Paron Rot'schild—rest his soul!—vhen he proke his knee. As soon as Lort Salispury 'eard of it he rushed off to Boole's, ain'd it? who had two sheeps killed a' purpose, an' de vool dressed 'specially to make de Brince dese vun-legged drowzers, vvhich, 'Eaven be braised, he don't vant after all, so I puy's der drowzers gheap orf his lortship's putler. Hi, Raphy, oop dere," he called, standing at the bottom of the dark staircase and yelling his loudest, "can'd you find dem Brince o' Vales' drowzers no more?"

"Down in a jiffy, farder," Raphael cried in reply, and in an incredibly short time he appeared, bearing the mutilated bags as tenderly as though they'd been the crown-cushion of the despoiled Theebaw.

"Dere! Ain'd dey peauties, my vrient!" exclaimed old Wolf, delightedly stroking the

one leg that remained, and smoothing the garment on the shop counter.

"Aye, aye, they're all right so fur as quality goes," assented the briny one.

"Kervality! My vord. I should t'ink dey vas kervality. An' look at de cut an' finish—'ere, now I'll tell yer vhat I'll do. I've took a great fancy to yer, 'cos you're a good-lookin' feller for vun t'ing, an' anudder is, dat I lose a nephew last year in a shibwreg on his away to Pritish Columpia, vhere he goes to try an' find gold vhere nopody's lost none—I gif yer dese drowers—I *giv'* 'em to yer—may I tie—feefteen shilling?"

"It's mighty kind of yer, cully, to orfer to giv' 'em to me for fifteen bob," responded the ho'sun, with a merry twinkle in his ultramarine eye, "but they'd be no damn good to me, even if you was to giv' 'em to me for nothink!"

"No?"

"No."

"An' vhy not?"

"'Cos you've taken yer soundin's carelessly, an' fouled a shoal. Take advantage of a lessenin' opportunity, uncle, to ship yer mud-'ook an' put out to sea! Don't yer tumble as they've *cut the wrong ruddy leg off?*"

And, thanking his stars that he still had his right toes to tell the approach of rain by, Horatio Nelson Farragut Miggles stumped cheerfully outside, the venerable Wolf being all too flabbergasted to detain him.

AT ROSH HOSHONAH

*An epistle addressed by Mr Moses Benrimo, of
Bevis Marks, to his Nephew in Johannis-
burg, on the Eve of the New Year.*

MY DEAR CHUDAH,

I should nefer ha' thought o' vritin' to yer, Chudah, to vish yer a good Rosh Hoshonah, an' vell ofer yer fast, but for bein' reminded py yer Aunt Beckie, the most sympatheticist voman in all de worlde. I reckon dere ain't many vimmin vith sich a sympathetic nature as 'ers, Chudah; vhy on'y de other night she see on a *Star* bill—"A Millionaire Assassinated and Robbed," and how it upset her—and pure sympathy, too! She did nothing but sob and moan till she see me arrive 'ome safe an' free that night — a vunderful sympathetic voman, vunderful!

What's the news. I tell yer:—

Ye recollect Benjamin Cohen's nephew—the vun vhat used to advertise for bank managers

at a tousand a year, an' the advertisement said, "shtamp for reply," an' vhere his profit came in vhas writin' back to 'em "appointment filled," on 'apenny pos'cards, an' changin' the shtamps at the Post Office—vell, he's just come back from a "brovincial walkin'-tour," so he says, an' has published a little 'and-book called *A Guide to the Gonovim, or The Location of the Loot*. In the openin' chabter he says; "Thith little vork, the thtudy of a lifedime, cometh from the pen of a retired Yiddisher buster vhat's made his geldt an' got no further use to enter the 'appy 'omes of Englandt with a crowbar. Nevertheless, any man preathin', vith prains in his headt, can git a 'andsome 'n elegant livin' at it, and no vun to be able to say as placks the vHITE of his eye. The best mossamotten's done a little way out; say tventy miles or so." Chabter Number Vun is for use at a average farmhouse. "On enterin' py the kitchen vinder you'll first find swei or drei bob on the top o' the kitchen clock, put there to pay the cat's shochet vith, or to shkvare the koloof merchant. The farmer's silver four-chewelled-ole Geneva 'll be 'anging on vun o' the nails on the dresser shelf. You'll find all the kintpatten's chewellery in the left-hand top drawer o' the

chest in the bedroom. Very likely they're got some deeds or policies—worth something—they're in a chapanned tin box under the ped. If there's any geldt in the house, ofer a couple of kvid, it's in the Bakin' Powder can on the top shelf o' the pantry. No farmer efer has much geldt in his pocket, but you'll find his trowsys 'ung ofer the pack of a chair, at the foot o' the ped, 'nd you can reach 'em from the vinder vith your 'ooked shtick. The key o' the barn hangs on a nail ofer the kitchen sink, 'nd there's chenerally a candle-lantern chust inside the cellar door. Shtick to these rules, 'nd you're no need to upset a chair or shkveek a single door! O' course, if you go in for extrys—say, the shiksa's last month's vages, you'll find 'em in a old purse, inside the vegetable dish on the dretther, or Little Chonnie's mission'ry pox, all vell 'nd cood—put I ain't allowed for it in these rules."

It's a vunderful vurk!

Ach, I can see Pen Cohen ofer again in him, and I dessay I've often told yer, Chudah, how Pen an' me travelled the country years ago. me vith bath sponges an' him vith books. Sponges an' books is lines that don't clash. yer see, and he could chenerally do a deal where often I couldn't. I rec'lect vun day a-valkin' up

by a road that led out o' Bromley for two long miles to call at a 'ouse vhere on'y a 'ermit lived. "Perchance," says Cohen, "perchance, he makes me a little bid for the lot—for vhy, vhat's a 'ermit got to do but sit an' read?" "And vash himself?" I says, not vishin' him to overlook my sponges. "No," says he, 'ermits don't vash." "My be-shroyen on 'ermits, then, vhy shall I vaste my time to go?" says I. But he overpersvades me, an' ve goes. Vhen ve gets there it's a dismal house—regular got the malourners, but ve puts our packs down, an' Cohen sets out his pooks on the doorstep—then he knocks. Vell, vhen the 'ermit come down (and ve'd shoved a bit o' flint in the door so he couldn't shut it, Cohen schcorums apout the peautiful volumes. The 'ermit said he didn't vant any, but I know he vouldn't shtall Cohen off. "You don't vant the 'Istry of England," says he, "sufferin' Lazarus! 'eres a vurk you should read—'Veepin' Villie; or Vhy did they Cut 'im?'—vhat a corcheous vurk! It's bin trarnslated, and trarnslated, 'n trarnslated, 'n shtill they can't get 'em out kvick enough—and vhat a charnce this is for yer, captain, to make me a little bid for a shmuggled vun!" "Go away," says the 'ermit, but Cohen stuck ot 'im like a raisin' stew. "I 'ave 'ere," says he,

puttin' 'Veepin' Villie' down, "another vunderful yurk, 'Be prepared: or When the Cat's away don't puy Sausages,' the only one in circerlation, 'ceptin' that as is pound to be lodged at the Prithish Museum. You can 'ardly take up a daily paper but vhat you sees scores of advertisements a-offerin' fabbylous sums for this yurk, of vvhich this is the only single copy in circerlation, I vish I ma die!—an' here am I a-sacrificin' the last copy. Shemor beni! if my pore father knew it, he'd shtart shpittin' o' blood—the very last vun of 'em, jest a-cause I'm partial to 'ermits——" "Vill ye go away?" cries the 'ermit. "The very last vun, py the plessed mezzuzah, and there'll never be no more, 'cos the chentleman vhat printed 'em is dead—rest his soul!—and there ain't no——" Ve vhas both drenched vith the 'ermit a-emptin' his slops out o' vinder; but, fortinately, Cohen 'ad the presence o' mind to pull the oil-skin ofer the volumes. "'Be Prepared,' not being rekvired," he goes on, "I shall now orfer you a yurk of a more ejucational character. 'Eres the 'Life of Levi ben Gershon,' vith his commentaries on the Book of Chob, 'nd the mishnah on vellum. Now, 'ere ye 'ave a yurk——" A old chair come out o' the vinder, and shtruck me on the nose, a-makin it pleed, 'nd I says to Cohen,

I says, "It's all very vell for you, perchance you make a gustomer; but," says I, "I'm a-goin' to glimb this telegrarph pole whilst I'm safe"—vich I did. Vhell he fairly vore the 'ermit out, and at last the 'ermit comes down. "It's no use," says he, "I carn't read." "Then ye wants a volume vith bictures?" says Cohen. "I 'ate 'em," says the 'ermit. "But a picture-book 'ud do to give to yer scheet little chiltren," says Cohen. "But I ain't got no chiltren," says the 'ermit—"nothing but a cat!" "I tought so," says Cohen, "I tought so—jest the very thing to suit yer—*yer vant a shtrong-pound pook to throw at the cat!*" By mine and yours, he sold him vun, too, and, more than that, he owned to me, when ve got a bit away, that, in givin' him his changhe, he managed to shove a lead schillin' off on him.

Now Pen's second son-in-law, Chudah Vasser-berger, is jest as berseverin', an' I reckon he, as you might say, inherits it by marriage, through Pen's daughter. He's shtarted a-travellin' for a firm vit pairs o' chentleman's braces. He von't nefer take "No" for a answer. De oder day he goes into a orfice in the Mincin' Lane, and de glerks says, "Not to-day, tam yer—get out." He nefer takes no notice, but he sets all his goots oudt on der gounter. "Tam it all," says der

glerks, "ve've tolt yer dree times to go ; now, are you goin', or nod?" "*I* carn't kick *meinself* oudt!" says he, a-turnin' round an' liftin' his goat-dails!

As a shooldvarden o' St Leman's, I've had a goot deal o' vorry, lately, Chudah, ofer de gomplaints made dat de Yiddisher ghildren at de Poard Schools is prought up too Goyisher. For my part, I can't see it. An' I vhas dere yesterday, too, vhen de first form in Sgribdure 'Istory an' Poker—mixed—vhas examined. I gif you an' insdance: The schoolmaster durns to der first poy, an' says—

"Who vhas it vhat said in his haste as all men vhas schorumsorgers?"

De first poy t'inks vor a minute, an' den he says, "I pass."

He looks at der second poy, put de second poy shakes his 'ead, an' says, "Pass me also."

Den de t'ird poy he says, "I turn it down, too. Make a jackpot of it."

"Zo!" says master, "you all bass; den now ve cut for a vresh deal," und out comes der cane!

Dere's pin a great deal o' sympathy vasted ofer old Goody Posener, vhat retired from the sponge and 'air-pin bizness in Brick Lane, and vhent to live in Sutherland Havinyou. There hasn't been a veek since Pasach that he ain't bin to at least

three levoyers, till he could find his vay to Vest Am or Villesden plindfold! Dey've noticed efery Fritay mornin', vhen the *Chewish Chronicle's* put py the side of his plate, that the first thing he turns to is the "Deaths." Directly after he's had his preakfast an' said the shemang, he shtarts writin' to the friends an' rellertives o' the departed, orferin' his sympathy, and sayin' as he knew the late lamented—rest his soul!—as vell as the late lamented did the trump king in the *écarté* pack. Nine times out o' ten back comes his invitation to the levoyer—den he's happy.

"Ungle," said his son-in-law to him last Tuesday—you rememper his son-in-law, the vun as made a shidduch vith a Goyisher gal, and, after shlenterin' Goody out o' twenty couter to take 'er to 'Olland, to be made a geurister, on'y took 'er to Prichton from Saturday to Monday, and shpent the difference gettin' hissself a memper-ship at 'Urst Park? "Ungle," he says, "vhat's yer game a-goin' to all these levoyers?"

"Come 'ere, Izzy," says the old man, "yer schvear yer von't tell a soul?"

"If I do, may I take a miesa mishinnah vhere I'm standin'," and he moved two steps. "Vhy is it?"

Old Goody fell to a-chucklin' just as if he vhas goin' to 'ave a fit o' apoplexy.

"Vell, I tell yer," he says, still a-chucklin', "I wasn't feelin' very vell, an' I vent to see a physician—a Goyisher physician—in Vimpole Shtreet. He says: 'Vhat you ought to take is plenty of carriage exercise,' an' *I'm a-takin' it, Izzy, I'm a-takin' it.*"

You know young Mister Ropinson, don't yer—the young Goyisher feller vhat wants to pecome a Jew for Lazarus' daughter? Vhell, I couldn't help laughin' at him the other day, he's so inkvisitive. He happened to meet Solly Gompertz—the Chazan—an' they vhas talkin' about Yom Kippur, and young Ropinson says:

"S'pose you caught a Jew preakin' his fast, Mister Gompertz, vhat should you do vith him?"

Solly looked very severe, an' he says: "If ve caught a Jew preakin' his fast ve should cut him."

"Vhat, *again?*" says the shlemiel.

Vhat a gershrei vhas there las' Sunday at Manny Lewis's an' Golda Palestine's sittin'-for-joy! To shtart vith, I nefer in my whole gezundt see sich a 'andsome an' elegant lot o' presints as they got, not in all my natch! They must ha' 'ad a underdweight o' silver if they 'ad a 'ounce! An' eleven of 'em give fish-slices! Pictures they 'ad, too—one, a splendid thing, measured eight feet by six, painted by a Yiddisher artist, too, who's

'ad his pictures in the Accaddymy. It was called a 'Armony in Red'—a beautiful thing, representin' a tortoiseshell cat 'avvin' a epperleptic fit on a tomato stall. 'Owever, there's all the pre-sints all spread out over the dinin'-table, includin' a 'andsome cheque from the bridegroom's father, what made his oof a-follerin' Salmon an' Gluckstein, an' is on'y a-vaitin' to see 'ow big a 'ouse in Park Lane old Gluckstein eventually puilts, so as he can put up one at least a floor bigger, and is goin' to do everythink like a real dook, even to fillin' the fire-buckets with champagne—and there's everythink done up Ar. Then Abe an' Levy Hockheimer arrives!—

"W'y, whoever arst *them*?" I fancies I can 'ear you arst.

I much know! But 'ow did they linger-longer-loo over them presents! The water was a-drip-pin' off old Abe's underlip on to a skillinton clock, an' Levy kep' on a-shruggin' at this thing or that till his shoulders rose an' fell like the price o' fish in a Yiddisher neighbor'ood on a hot Friday. Vell, they 'ung about and 'ung about till at last there's absolutely nopody in the room with the presents besides theirselves an' a old feller dressed like a chazan with gold-rimmed spectykles on. Abe watches very closely till the old cove turns

his head, when he whips one o' the eleven fish-slices off the table, and hides it down the leg of his poot! O' course Levy spotted it: trust Levy to be behind 'and when a bit o' gonophin's goin' on! What's sauce for Abe is sauce for Levy, and, takin' advantage, as he thought, o' the old chazan turnin' his 'ead, Levy pinches one o' the remainin' ten fish-slices, and bungs it into his breast pocket. But he 'adn't bin quick enough! Afore he can realise what's up, the chazan has got him by the collar—and wasn't he strong for a old man, too!—and with his other 'and he whips a whistle out of his pocket an' blows it. I'm jiggered if it wasn't one o' Noser's detectives as old Lewis had got to watch the presents!

Well, then, the circus commenced, I tell ye. About half-a-dozen o' the guests squeezed in along of old Lewis afore they could get the door to, an' everybody a-talkin' at once. Levy, 'eld by the chazan, was as white as a ghost an' scratchin' of his 'ead. Presently he got a chance to speak. "Lewis, me oldt friend, Lewis," he lisps, tremblin' all the time like a ashpan leaf, "d'ye mean to thay ath you can even *think* yer old friend 'Ock'eimer a common, low thief?" "The detective swears he see'd yer put the thing in yer pocket," cries Lewis. "And so I

did," says old Levy, "an' thatth jutht what I want to exthplain. I vhatth jutht rehearthin' a little conjurin' trick to amuthe yer guethts later on. Now, you, thir (to the chazan-detective), you thwear you thaw me put a fiththlice in my pocket? You do. Very well; now then, thearch my brother Abe—*you'll find it in hith left boot!*"

They did so, and o' course there it was. Old man Lewis didn't know what to do to get out of it, but he 'pologised for about twenty minutes, and wound up by sayin' that if a fiver 'ud wipe out the insult, there it was, an' old Levy took it—still sulkin'—an' took his 'ook. He didn't stand on the order of his goin', either, for, as you rumbles, o' course, *he'd done 'em for a fishslice after all!*"

On dit, as dey say in Baris, Chudah, Golda's younger prother, Shechem, is gettin' hissself very unpopular all around Pishopsgate an' Spitalfields. He changed eighteen 'arf-crowns the other day at vun public-'ouse in Prushfield Street, where the lantlordt 'ad missed seferal pewter pots since Shechem used the 'ouse. The lantlordt looked a bit annoyet, but now he serves half-pints in glass marmalade mugs, and vhat makes it look verse, Shechem don't zouf no more beer there, but gets shikkur ofer the vay, and only

comes in to shleep hissself sober on the bar parlour-table.

By the vay, there's a new Yiddisher butcher in Spitalfields, and he's awful near. He shafes all the bones o' the meat vhat's left, shoves the shafings into shkins, and sells 'em as Periosteum Sossitches!

But, speakin' apout nearness, Louis Larzarus an' Philly Hocherberger is vell known as the nearest Yidden in the Po Lomod. They'd cut a garment to the eighth of a inch, which may pe very smart fur showin' orf the figger, but don'd suit eferybody. I shvear it vhas a ofercoat of theirs vhat give Hyamy Sampson heart disease.

Of a night, when the shop vas closed, they used to go upshtairs to talk over the day's pizness, but there vhas chenerally a disturbance apoudt who should pay for the candle, so it came at last that they uthed to thit there abtholutely in the dark. "For," said Philly, "we kin talk ath vell in the dark ath in the light." Vun night they vhas talkin' in the dark—leath-vays, Lazaruth vas—vhen he tought he heard stranch sounds comin' from the part of the room vhere Philly Hocherberger vas.

"Vhat are ye doin', Philly?" sayth he.

"Vell," sayth Phil, "ith all dark up 'ere, an' no vun can see me, so I thought I'd shlip orf my trouthers; it thaves wearin' 'em out!"

Shemor beni! they *was* near!

An' speakin' o' meannesses, vunce again, ain't it remarkaple vhat a lot o' beoble expects to go to the play for nothing. There's Mossy Shuppastein, for instance, who vhent to a manager he knew last Saturday to ask for an order, "I vant to bring a couple of friends vith me," said Mossy, and the manager give him a private box for three. Vhen Mossy see'd that the order said, "Private box," he t'ought vhat a great mozzle for him, and he vhent and invited his fader, and his fader-in-law, and his two brudders, and Vinkelheimer, the vinder-glass merchant, and a feller vhat he owed some geldt to over solo-vhist, and the Bal Korah from his shool—in all there vhas ten of 'em. Vhen they gets to the theaytre, Acha Nebbish—vhat a surprise for the manager! He looked at 'em perplexed like, especially at Vinkelheimer, who, having no opera glasses, had borrowed a telescope from a friend of his vhat did the penny street-corner Astronomy bizness. "Mossy," says the manager, "there's bin a mistake here. Vhen you asked for a order for three, I thought

only wanted to make mazoomen, but I see you've brought enough for Minyan!"

They tell me, Chudah, as Sam Lewis don't intend to go to Monty Carlo as usual this vinter, an', in consekervence, the "Ahdmeenistraaceong"—vhatever it is—'as ordered de blace to be illuminated. Vell, so long, Chudah, my poy, so long. YOUR AFFECTIONAT UNGLE—MO.

(Age and distance no object. No offerings taken.)

THE FALLING BACK OF MOSES

HERMANN

IN this age of marvels and well-nigh incredible achievements, when 1865 brandy of peculiarly fine bouquet can be successfully distilled from old leather hatbands, and a man may decorate his mantelshelf with panel portraits of his *radius* and *ulna* whilst the same still hold their places in the man's interior economy, the conversion of a Hebrew to Christianity would seem to be but a very small matter.

It isn't, however.

True, there is a society—a well-endowed one—in the field, which puts forward this department as a speciality, but the net results of its labours can hardly be called encouraging. It has made one convert. To speak strictly by the card, it has made and *re-made* him, for he falls away from grace in the most lamentable way about the time the horses go to Lincoln, and needs no further spiritual consolation till the result of the Manchester November Handicap is recorded in the

Racing Calendar, and not always then—within a day or two—if he has found the winner, which compels me to express the conviction that, should the Stewards of the Jockey Club ever sanction a continuous, all-the-year-round season of flat-racing, as the late lamented Earl of Suffolk urged them to do, the existing Society for the Turning of "Link" Jews into "Froom" Christians might not only lay down its shovel and its hoe, but also suspend its Stradivarius or other musical instrument, and that, too, for a permanency.

I, for one, never regarded the proselytising of Mo Hermann as a well-accomplished fact. When Moses first came under my notice he had a small second-hand jewellery shop at the eastern end of Saint Mary Axe. Also he had a most friendly understanding with the police of that day and district, a kind, hospitable heart, and table manners that, when used abroad, attracted the attention of total strangers. He bought of, and sold to anybody, and the only question he ever asked was at the conclusion of a deal, as he brought out a gallon stone jar from beneath the counter, with the invariable inquiry, "Will ye take a little tot of our rum, now?" The James Crow aristocracy of the dramatic profession patronised him liberally for diamonds, and from

going to see them play—the stones, not the sticks—Mo was always sufficiently well posted in theatrical topics to be regarded as a First Night Bong Vivoor in the best circles around Houndsditch and Spitalfields.

My word! what a critic he'd have made: even the unusually captious David Solomons, who was by blood related to a great composer, owned it.

"I shall stand Mo Hermann's judgment on actin' against any other man's in the City o' London," declaimed Mr Solomons, removing the gorgeously-banded cigar from his capacious jaws, and speaking with an air of authority; "an' Ike says as there's never bin a actor on the English stage since the days o' Macready as could 'old a aujience spellbound like this yere Lewis Waller does in 'The Three Musketeers'!"

Nobody ever contradicted Mo Hermann's opinion on theatrical matters, because it was unanimously considered that to do so would be ridiculous, Moses being to a certain extent "in it." He'd witnessed every production at the "Grand" since the veteran Charles Morton brought out "Genevieve de Brabant" there. He had not wavered in his allegiance when Charlie Meyers and Frank Hall ran it as a variety show, nor did he absent himself when

the house fell into the hands of the harpies. "Good lord!" he'd cry, "an' *what* it was to go in on the nod in *those* days! You'd 'ardly be inside afore up 'ud come one cove an' snatch orf yer 'at. 'Sixpence cloak-room,' he'd say. Then up 'ud roll another one, an' gonoph yer umbereller. 'Take a ticket for this,' he'd growl—'a tanner!' By this time another of 'em 'ad skinned yer out o' yer coat—another tizzy—an', may I die, if yer 'adn't got a porous plaister on, it was always five to four on yer enterin' the bloomin' stalls *naked!*"

Then, too, Mo had been the holder of a free pass for the Cambridge Music Hall until the night when that ill-starred house burned down; whilst his only sister, a peroxide blonde, of a complexion rarely met with amongst the daughters of Israel, described herself as an actress, and resided in a gaudy flat in the Bedford Square district. So many journalistic gentlemen came to interview her on the theatrical outlook—at least, so said Mo—that she had to have a special electric bell at her door for reporters, with "Press" inscribed on the button.

As for the drama itself, Mo fairly ate it! No detail was so small that it escap'd his critical eye. In his own mind he appraised the weight of Cymbeline's crown, and worked out its value

by the present price of gold. He would form an estimate of the probable cost of the clock in Imogen's bedroom, and argue it out with whoever chanced to be his companion. He could tell you what sort of backing a touring star was enjoying by the pattern and the quality of the carpet used in the drawing-room scene in the first act; and yet he was not mean nor narrow-minded.

Bless your heart, no!

Did the acting-manager elect to take a benefit, Mo's six bob for two family-circle tickets was the first money in the treasury: did a "change" take place in the caterers for refreshments, Mo spent the whole evening standing at the bar, "drinkin' champagne out of a celery glass, jus' like a bloomin' Earl!"

For once in a way, however, I felt inclined to question Mr Solomons as to the method of reasoning by which Mo Hermann arrived at his decision with regard to Mr Lewis Waller's paramount histrionic abilities.

"'Ow do I know?" he responded. "Why, wasn't I wiv' Mo at the Grand las' Tuesday, an' did I see him wiv' my own eyes spellbound—aghast?"

I said nothing; but I suppose the expression I

was wearing was one of credulity, for he continued :

"I can *prove* it to yer. Mo on'y ate *one* piece o' fried fish all the evenin', though he'd brought in *four*—so there!"

It was indisputable. No man can have his lower maxillary at set-zero, and eat at the same time.

It was at a time when all Saint Mary Axe considered Moses Hermann to be doing fairly well, however, that he one day mysteriously disappeared. And no satisfactory explanation was forthcoming. Mo's only daughter, an extremely handsome maiden, with a bearing of amused hauteur that put one in mind of a duchess in high spirits, carried on the show. "Pa" had gone to Kimberley, she said; but most of those she so informed smiled incredulously, and about a fortnight afterwards, the shop closed suddenly.

The truth, though it didn't leak out until months afterwards, was that Mo Hermann had "got" the newer religion. Also he had got it strong.

An ambitious and distinguished pilot to the upper blue had mysteriously "nobbled" Moses, who, dreading the scoffs and jeers of his old co-religionists, had gone away to begin the world

anew in a thriving little market town in Gloucestershire. Installed, by the aid and good offices of his new friend, in a pretentious silversmith's shop in the main street of the town, his black beard taken off, and his whole appearance changed, he was no longer Hermann, but "awaiting the favour of your esteemed orders, John Henderson."

Over Madge—late Miriam—who had come to the conclusion that "Spanish blood flowed in her veins," the young bucks of the surrounding stations went fairly mad, engendering much bitterness in the hearts of the local belles, on whom they reversed the process of investiture in the order of the mitten. So, with trade prospering, and his only daughter—the apple of his eye—triumphing in the conquest of half a dozen mutton-headed rustics, whose greatest delight appeared to be to blow their brass in buying her trinkets from her father's stock, Mo looked like raking in the shekels and smoking ninepenny Murias till the kine came home; but a queer thing happened.

How true are the words of the good old precept, "Vaunt not thy greatness, O man, for a jocund flea in a linen sheet can upset the rest of a Czar!"

There came to reside in those parts a prematurely aged young man, whose furrowed cheeks and general air favoured the conjecture that the wearer had seen some mighty hard sliding in the days of his youth. Even in his most mirthful moments he maintained a cold reserve; he kept himself, as it were, on an invisible curbed bit. His visiting-cards were inscribed "Mr J Hutchinson-Hotpot," and he was heavily bears-greased most of the time.

He had, so report said, made a whacking pile in "the city," and was only turning over in his mind the best ways of spending some of it in the country town of his fancy. Just about that time the virtuous and then unbusted Hooley bequeathed the gold Communion Plate to St Paul's, and Hutchinson-Hotpot considered it a lead worthy to be followed. It was a great, even if it was a second-hand idea, and the worthy pulpit-pounder who had brought John Henderson into the fold espoused the scheme most warmly, not that *his* flock would get the plates and pots, but he was determined to secure the order as a sop for his neophyte.

In his canvassing he was desperately in earnest—as the cloth *can* be when it's trying—and success soon crowned his labours. With John

Henderson was "placed" the order for the sacred gew-gaws. The munificent Hutchinson-Hotpot himself called at the silversmith's for designs and estimates, and small wonder that the artillery of Madge's eyes riddled him, e'en as the belted Maxim gun does the rude and simple savage, in his hopeless valour and "the altogether." Hotpot would have ordered "forty bloomin'" (as the boy said of the tarts) Communion Services "an' the man that made 'em."

During the three weeks that the order was in hand, Hutchinson worshipped very regularly at the new shrine, and the goddess within it was very kind. There was something about a man who could win a "parcel" in the far away—far too far away—city, that elevated him a good head and shoulders above the ingenuous young farmer, whose cunning alone amounted to soaking his peas overnight before planting 'em, and whose business ability chiefly consisted of his great handiness with a constipated calf.

Then came the day of the presentation. From early morn the bells were rung, many of the shops were closed, and the rector of the lucky church, who was not half a bad sort, though he couldn't quite hit it with his church-wardens, missed one of the best runs of the season with

the Pottesmore in order to accept the precious golden dole. It was all so good to see and hear, so generous and so pure, that many an erring young man who saw and heard it formed a mute resolution to do better and fall over no more bedroom chairs.

Alas! that the picture may not be left pouring through the lens of this metaphorical magic-lantern; but the cloud must come.

It settled over the town of W—— one morning when Henderson, finding his daughter's bedroom unoccupied, started scouring the town for her, only to learn at every point that Mr Hutchinson-Hotpot was an absentee also.

And the brilliant financier hadn't weighed in for the gold plate, either!

One—two—three days went by, and the cloud grew larger, blacker. On the fourth a Scotland Yard man set foot in W——, and, not to prolong the end too obstinately, the whole unsavoury truth came out. Hutchinson-Hotpot was no more a millionaire than—well, the writer, who may be searched by holders of official permits on any Tuesday or Friday during June or July, between the hours of 11 and 12 A.M.

"Give you back the communion plate?" gasped the wardens, when the wretched

Henderson laid his case before them. "Impossible! literally, absolutely impossible! Though we sympathise with you fully—deeply—in the heavy loss you have sustained, the plate *has been consecrated!*"

Then Moses Hermann fell back from grace, and now? Why, if you want to buy a gold watch cheap, and don't mind the swivel being a little damaged, come with me to Wentworth Street, E., some Sunday morning!

PELEG, THE UNRIGHTEOUS

MIDWAY through September, as a general thing, there comes a day on which there can scarcely be found in the whole of this great metropolis of ours one business street where the line of more or less busy shops—whether, as a rule, they hummed like hives or said nothing, but lay vigilantly watchful like bright steel traps in a rat-run cellar—is not punctuated by at least one, which has its shutters up, and affixed to them a written notice to the effect that business will be resumed “as usual” on the following morning. In Hebrew strongholds, such as Houndsditch, and Highbury, and Maida Vale whole rows of trading establishments are closed, some of them giving no outward visible reason, whilst others (and “there are others”) belonging to degenerate Sheenies, who habitually shirk recognition as members of their ancient faith, sport placards which ambiguously attribute the temporary suspension of business to the holding

of "Our Annual Holiday," as though it had been something with Rye House, and broad beans, and cornetted wagonettes in it. It is Youm Kippur, the Day of the Atonement, whereon the Israelites believe that their judgments are finally decided upon.

It is on this one day that the Holfords become Hyams's, the Lewis's Levi's, and the Beddingtons Moses's again, and till the ram's horn is blown at sunset, even the ordinarily indifferent sons and daughters of the Ghettabito express, not unostentatiously, their deep regret for the back-slidings of the previous twelvemonth by abstaining from the flesh-pots, the coffee-cups, and, lest peradventure they might quench their thirst by accident, the tooth-brushes of fifty-seventh century civilisation.

But there always is in every flock one sheep that Nature has dyed in the wool, and Peleg Terah Hobinstock, the silversmith and pawnbroker of Sandy's Row, was a greater grief to the circumcised shepherds of Spitalfields than a chronic stomach-ache. All regardless of the fine old Biblical front names which his late lamented male parent had borrowed from the "begat" chapter of the First Book of Moses, called Genesis, and bestowed upon him at his

Brismelah, Peleg paid little heed to Mosaic ordinances, and was in truth and metaphor a permanent blister on the bowed neck of the local branch of the great community. With what righteous indignation did the devout notice, as they passed along to Shool on a certain bright autumnal morning, that Peleg's *mont de pieté* was wide open, and drawing the Goyisher needy like a mustard leaf. For the Goyim of that quarter are always mightily thirsty and woefully impecunious on a Monday morning, and Hobinstock's was the only mashkin-shop that had taken its shutters down. The rest, all owned by conscientious Yidden, were closed up as tight as a bull's auricular orifice in the early wasp season, and, strange to relate, beneath the wafered notice of the suspension of business on the exterior of each shop was affixed a small mucilaged label, volunteering the information, in crimson ink—

But Hobinstock's, in Sandy's Row, is Open.

Clearly somebody had been around on Kol Nidre, after "lights out," and slapped those labels up. Thus Peleg drove a roaring trade.

On the eleventh day of Rosh Hoshonah, when all Judea had fed again and settled down to everyday life, a good and pious Chazan called on Hobinstock to upbraid him on the

enormity of his offence. He scowled horribly at the renegade, and his black eyes flared angrily beneath his shaggy eyebrows as he said sternly: "Do you not know that yesterday was Youm Kippur, the Day of the Atone-ment——?"

Peleg, radiantly cheerful, plucked the good man by the sleeve, and, dragging him to the counter, pointed to a great heap of miscellaneous merchandise, pledges of the day before, all ticketed but not yet put away.

"Look, look!" cried he, "seven 'undered an' sixty pair o' kicksies, two 'undered an' forty-two vimins' chemises, ninety-six silver vatches, an' a' undered an' fifteen flat irons. Y'um Kipper! *I wish you 'ad more of 'em!*"

PONTIUS, THE WHITE MAN

BEN BARWUN, the big ready-money bookmaker, stood before his lace-covered dressing-table, preparing to go to bed. A big, brusque giant was Benjamin, with a large heart beating under his rough exterior and artificial teeth which did not fit him. Time had been when Ben had to "get a bit at *any* game"; when Clerks of Courses had shuddered, and even Sergeant Ham's men had stopped growing whenever he put in an appearance at a meeting. Now, to all appearances, he enjoyed every luxury which riches could bestow, but still there was a cloud upon his brow. As he unscrewed the seventh priceless diamond from his shirt, and dropped it into a cigar-box, which already contained about a pint and a half of similar gems, he remarked to the partner of his successes—(the partner of his reverses had been "found drowned" after an unusually alcoholic Henley,

years before)—“Mord, I’ve got the spur, fair! No kid about it, I’ve got the spur.”

“Oh,” replied Maude, muffled beneath a mountain of costly bedclothes, the most conspicuous article of which was a scarlet and white satin quilt, with the figure of a golden horse in the centre over the embroidered legend: *Good old Reminder diddles in for the City and Suburban!* “Oh, an’ what’s give it to yer?”

The question came as an opportunity of relief to Barwun, for he answered with alacrity: “Why, a bit of a Sheeny boy that I’ve barred for years has took a liberty with me for seven o’ the best!”

“Oh, come to bed! *That* won’t break yer.”

“It ain’t that, but I can’t stand bein’ took a liberty with. He come to me jest before the big race to-day, an’ I was offerin’ threes on the field, an’ he ses, ‘Ben, old man, I’ve got a bit to take orf a bloke presently, but I want a bit meantime on this fav’rite. Will ye put me down twenty-one to seven?’ ‘Bring the ready iron, my lad,’ says I. ‘It saves a lot o’ talkin’.’ However, bein’ busy, an’ wantin’ to get rid of him, I let him have it. Result, stuck for seven!”

Maude only grunted something, not entirely

complimentary to Mr Barwun's state of sanity, under the bedclothes, and, presently, Benjamin, having donned a quiet suit of plum-coloured spun silk pyjamas, turned in beside her, and soon fell asleep.

Now blessings light on him that first invented sleep. If only he could have cornered his invention, what a pot of money he might have made. Speaking personally, and apologising for the intrusion, I find that I slumber more sweetly in a night cab, or on a Zeeland steamboat in the North Sea, or even on the wallflower's bench at a supper club, than ever I do in bed ; indeed, but for the fact that I usually press the creases out of my trousers between the mattresses, I never would go to bed at all.

How long Benjamin and his columbine slept matters not a button to the purport of this tale ; but the moon, high in the glorious vault of heaven, shone through the venetian blinds and threw a bright, shimmering light upon the buckles of Ben's braces, flung carelessly over the back of a Looey Quinzey chair, and sported with the tangles of "the Second Mrs Tanqueray's" solferino hair, as the sound of wheels was heard in the road. Nearer and nearer they came, and when they stopped outside the Maison Barwun,

Benjamin himself opened one eye and raised himself upon his elbow. The further sound of footsteps in his own front garden led Barwun to get up and peer out through the blinds. A man, heavily muffled in a big overcoat, was about to open the garden gate ; a small covered van, drawn by a sleepy-looking pony, stood by the kerbstone.

Cracksmen for a monkey !

As a precautionary measure, and having no great inclination to encounter an armed burglar whilst in spun-silk pyjamas, stockinged feet, and the cold dark hall, Benjamin opened the window a little from the bottom, and called in guttural tones :

" 'Ullo there ! 'Ullo there ! "

The man in the overcoat paused and looked up at the window. It was too dark to see his face ; but his tones, when he answered Barwun's challenge, seemed familiar to Benjamin.

" Love-a-duck, Ben, ith that you ? Vhy, I t'ought you'd pe gone to ped long ago. Come down, vill ye ; I vant to see yer, p'rticklar ? "

" All right, wait a bit," said Ben, and closing the window, he remarked to the half-awakened fair one, " I'm jiggered if it ain't the very party I was speakin' about ! "

As, with eyes still only half opened, Benjamin descended the velvety stairs, he couldn't shake off his mind the conviction that his visitor had come to "settle." Nor was he wrong, for, no sooner had he withdrawn the bolts from their sockets and opened the polished oak - and - gold - inlaid door just wide enough to admit the person of Pontius Emanuels, youngest son of Ezekiel Emanuels, the great "Bohemian and fancy" merchant of Houndsditch, than that shining light among "the Children," delivered himself of his load—the load upon his conscience—with the free, untrammelled output of an Itchen dredger. Beginning somewhat ostentatiously, he asked—

"Ben, did yer ever 'ear any one as could impute a dirty or dis'onest action to me?—eh, did yer?—could anybody ever say as black was the white o' me eye?"

"No," admitted Ben, scenting the coming of the blunt, "never!"

"No, an' I 'ope you never vill, Ben. May I die, but I shall always try an' go straight, an' when I can't——" Here he put himself into the supposed attitude of a suicide taking a header, and added philosophically—"Well, *then*, it'll be about time for me to make a 'ole in the water."

"'Ear, 'ear," said Benjamin approvingly, as though that had been his own particular motto ever since he could remember.

"I do think," the Yid went on, "that a gentleman should always be'ave *as* a gentleman, Ben, and that's 'ow I intended be'aving with you when I took that twenty-one to seven to-day."

"Well?" interrupted Ben, thinking the sweetness was intolerably long drawn out.

"Well, as you says, Ben, of course ye're well acquainted with the fac' that our firm is the biggest importers o' Bohemian an' fancy goods *known*, an' one o' these days, when my dear old pater—spare his life!—goes to his little bit o' free'old at Willesden, I shall 'ave a bit more than I 'ave now to come racin' with."

"Oh, blow *that*!" said Barwun, disappointedly, "You owe me seven."

"'Arf a minute, Ben, 'arf a minute," said the Hebrew, passing over the allusion, "We—at least, the pater—makes a leadin' line of four-fold Japanese screens, scarlet, cinnamon, or black, and braided in the best Yokyarmer citron gold. By bringin' 'em over by the eight thousand, we can do 'em at eleven and nine, an' clear three ha'pence a piece out of 'em."

"Well?"

“Well, I can’t get that ‘seven’ I owe yer off my conscience, but what ‘ave I done—why gonophed the pore old pater’s keys o’ the ware-’ouse, an’ I’ve *brought yer up twelve o’ them four-fold screens!* Gimme a shillin’, and all’s quits between us: ‘onesty’s the best policy arter all!”

MUD SPOTS

IN the days when he lodged in Ryder Street, and I had the privilege of seeing him quite frequently, the Viscount was about as free from money as a frog is from feathers; but he has since achieved the Earldom, and, with rare good sense, has dropped his pals of '88. It is not a matter of great moment to me, because, being naturally industrious, I still get my meals regularly, but—there are others. Aye, there were several others in those bright halcyon times, but many have died fighting for their country; whilst old brandy and the hypodermic syringe have done silent but effective work amongst the rest. It is sad to think upon.

For a period of four or five years around that time I heard more talk of reversions and first-charges than I have ever done before or since, for the Viscount's ordinary day, between breakfast and dinner, was invariably spent in raising enough brass to enable him to spend

the evening cheerfully, and mighty rough hustling it was at times. There wasn't a single money-lender in the metropolis who didn't hold some of that bright young nobleman's paper, and, as I remarked at the lead off, the Derby week in which Ayrshire covered himself with glory found Percy — that was not his front name, but 'twill serve—just about as stony as the Druidical reservation on Salisbury Plain. It's a hateful time to be hard up is Derby week, and, short of robbing his lady mother of her family jewels and hocking them, Percy was prepared to do desperate things to raise a hundred. At this dark stage it not infrequently happens that a ray of light is suddenly shed across one's gloom.

Percy's manservant, reading the *Morning Post*, struck the advertisement of a brand-new money lender, one that had never been heard of before.

His name was Warden, and he gave the address of a private house in Bloomsbury Square. On his valet telling him the glad news, Percy mixed himself a real mahogany-hued brandy and soda, and sent across to Scott's for a new silk hat. I was sitting with him, begging him to keep calm, when the new cady arrived.

Man never selected clothes, collar, and necktie with better taste or greater care than Percy did that morning. And then he picked out the very identical handkerchief and just the right gloves, and the shade of his buttonhole from Warren & Craik's was the crowning stroke of harmony that topped the luck. Nothing could have been better; if Warden was any less impressionable than the imposing stone in a printing office, he'd pull out his cheque-book on sight.

At the corner of Jermyn Street a hitherto unconsidered problem confronted us. It had been raining heavily, but the clouds had cleared off. The roadway was filthy. Was it to be a hansom or a four-wheeler?

In a hansom, with the glass up — and only a salamander can tolerate, having the thing down—you are certain to get splashed by the traffic coming towards you. In a four-wheeled fever-box you must take your beaver on your knees or get it hopelessly ruffled against the roof of the old shebang.

"Let us walk and keep near the houses," said Percy. Deeming the advice to be good, we walked.

Damned be the man who first invented

omnibuses! May he be tucked away in a cranny in the south-east corner of Hades, where Gabriel won't find him with a telescope! As we cut across New Oxford Street by Mudie's, the miserable crocks of a passing Shepherd's-Bush-and-Liverpool-Street threw up a couple of jets of filth off the top of the asphalt, and bull's-eyed the Viscount on each side of his collar! The bus rolled on down Holborn as though nothing had happened; but Percy stood on the kerbstone perfectly livid. The mere thought of mud spots and money-lenders in combination would have terrorised men of far less superstition.

To have gone back to Ryder Street would have been to fly deliberately in the face of the luck; the only possible compromise was a new sixteen - and - a - half "Clarence" at a hosier's in Holborn, and how consummately horrid new linen always does look. Dejectedly we retraced our footsteps through Hart Street and entered Bloomsbury Square.

When we came into the presence of the usurer we discovered that the unsophisticated "Warden" was "Ike" Gordon, *alias* Willis, *alias* Hall *alias* Edwards, *alias* Heaven only knows what besides—a red-hot shecny usurer, who already

had enough of Percy's dishonoured bills to re-paper the Tabernacle—and his cynical greeting to the Viscount was—

"Y'r lordship never means to say you've come to settle?"

Idly we wandered back to Ryder Street.

"God's truth!" ejaculated Percy, as he proceeded to remove the band of new linen from his offended neck, "why, we couldn't have got the price of a small bottle if I'd changed every stitch about me, from my undershirt out!"

Which was quite close to the fact!

GAL'S GOSSIP



JANVIER

HALF MOON STREET,
NEW YEAR'S DAY.

BON JOUR, PETITE MADGE!

So many thanks, dearest, for your pretty New Year's card, and for the seasonable enquiries inscribed upon it. Do you know, dear, it has quite cheered me up. I am essentially a creature of the sunshine. I yearn for the warmth and fragrance of June, for the garden parties, and the water picnics and the races. Alas! this is *la morte saison*; the garden lies beneath the stodgy snow, the river is frozen over, whilst as for the racehorses, even the sporting papers do not mention them, but fill

up their columns instead with such items as this :—

"Coddam

"RETURN OF THE LAMBETH CHAMPION.

"A well-deserved testimonial breakfast was tendered at the early hour of 8 A.M., on Wednesday morning last, by a few old friends and admirers, to Mr 'Bowler' Bannister, to celebrate his re-joining society. The *déjeuner* took place at the Warders' Arms Coffee Tavern, Caledonian Road, N., each guest ordering what he liked, and paying for it. The *beneficiaire*, well-known in Coddam circles, seemed in excellent spirits, and was nothing loth to tackle a 'bowl o' brown, two steps and a boiled nest 'un.' During the meal he spoke in very feeling terms of the Governor of Her Majesty's Prison opposite, and alluded to the little entertainment he would like to tender that gentleman were he able to do so. Mr Bannister will play, *on dit*, in the coming match for the championship to be held on Saturday next at the 'Shah and Stomach-Warmer,' Upper Ground Street, S.E. Motto: Fair Play, Civility, and Sparkling Ales."

As I say, dear, out-door sport is quite at a standstill, and in these deplorable circumstances, and the concomitant absence of "exes," many a gentleman-jockey is—I was going to write "on the verge of starvation," but as that term would be singularly inapplicable to the case I am going to relate, I will say instead—"reduced to desperation."

It happened on Christmas Eve that Charlie was giving me supper at the Saveloy, where they have the most wonderful *chef* in town.

Though the regular diners call him, with unbecoming familiarity, "Joe," Charlie tells me he is a *cordon bleu*, and indeed sports the blue ribbon in his button-hole whenever he appears in his coat. Well, at a near-by table was seated "Bobbie" Armstrong, who used to train his own jumpers at Lewes, and on the opposite side of the room was a well-known beauty of the season before last from Redcliffe Gardens. Between these two a furious flirtation of shy looks and subtle glances had been going on all through supper, and the celebrated horseman only waited judiciously until the young lady from Redcliffe Gardens had paid her bill, to step across the room, and ask Charlie to give him an introduction to her. This Charlie was fortunately able to do. As it subsequently transpired that we were all driving the same way, "Bobbie" invited the young lady to share his hansom, and when her door was reached he joyfully fell in with her suggestion to step inside and take a "binder," at which he declared he felt as happy as a buck-rat in an old sink.

She showed him her pretty boudoir, with its Louis the XVth furniture all upholstered in amber satin so as not to "clash" with her corsets,

the Salon Japonais, all decorated—even to the lid of the coal-hod—with gold-braided, reversible-necked storks, and the steps leading to the attic-chamber, where the distressed gentlewoman, who acted as her *mère de théâtre*, morosed her days away. Then she took “Bobbie” into a delightful little Oriental apartment on the ground floor, in the centre of which stood a red-legged, brass-topped Benares table, on which was a huge earthenware pan, containing about half a hundred weight of the sticky mahogany-coloured dough, of which the festive season makes a leading article.

“Now, then,” she said. “this is where you have to stir my Christmas pudding,” and with that, she grabbed the long wooden spoon that was sticking out of the dough, and joggled it about. “Everybody who stirs it has to drop a piece of gold into it,” she continued, handing him the spoon, and “Bobbie’s” countenance fell like July quotations for coal. All the money he had got in his trousers (which included every other part of the known world) consisted of one half-sovereign, one sixpenny-bit and a half-penny; yet he well knew that to disobey the lady meant instant investiture in the order of the street—to even hesitate was to risk her displeasure, but to

comply meant a foodless, drinkless Christmas Day.

His heart well-nigh stopped beating, and his breath came in short, quick gulps as he dragged the half-jimmy—his little ewe-lamb!—out of his jeans, and chucked it, with an assumed air of recklessness, into the sickly compound.

“Aha!” he laughed with ill-simulated gaiety, as he gave the stuff a vicious stir; then, realising his penurious state, he said: “I s’pose you couldn’t give me such a thing as a cigarette, could you, little woman?” Oh yes, she could; she had some upstairs, and would go and fetch them.

The instant she left the room, a strange, weird light shone in the horseman’s eyes: the expression on his face was one composed of mad hope mixed with dauntless determination. It was a time for action, not for thought, and, with a muffled cry of joy, he bent over the big pan and buried his face in the pudding! Once!—twice!—thrice!—he withdrew it, his jaws chewing vigorously. Now and again his teeth closed on an unseen something that gave a metallic chink, whereupon he would hurriedly expectorate that “something” into his right palm, and again duck his features into the un-

boiled, indigestible mass, for all the world like a well-trained hound rooting for truffles.

Thanks to the time it took his delightful hostess to find the cigarettes, and thanks also to the number and the liberality of her previous pudding-stirrers, "Bobbie" found, when the sound of "Mrs Redcliffe's" returning footsteps on the stairs warned him that it was time to "cease firing," and clean up his features on the cardinal silk lining of the heavy tapestry *portière*, that he was no less than four pounds ten ahead of the game!

But, reverting to the smart people we saw at the Savoy, who do you think came in late? Guess, dear? But, there, you never could, so I will tell you: Captain "Algy" Boundah, positively! He can't be a day less than fifty, and is as bald as a Radical election lie, but he's got *another* mash for all that. It's not a chorister this time, Ma'ge—choristers are not *fin de siècle*—but a "living picture"; all the gilt-edged old chappies in the really best sets now run a "living picture." I had to be coldly polite to her, as Charlie and Algy are such very old chums; but though all her talk was about what "we" did "in Society," it was precious little that *she* knew of the habits of the monkeys in *that* tree!

Algy told Charlie that he'd made up his mind to have a go for a divorce against the woman he foolishly led to the altar of St George's, eleven years ago, but found she'd found out all about the "living picture," and thus spiked his battery.

Did you go to the ball at Covent Garden on Monday? Maggie Rutter did, and enjoyed it immensely. The character she chose to represent was Diane de Poitiers, the "favourite" of Henry II., which was hardly an appropriate character, I thought, seeing that Maggie has been the "favourite" of three or four thousand people, rather than of one, during the last quarter of a century! Ethel Walters, who went as Bessie Wentworth in the pickaninny costume, scored a distinct success, although her "get-up" cost her next door to nothing. As she did not wish to go to great expense, we went over together on the morning of the ball to borrow the flannel things of a male cousin of hers, who has a bachelor flat in Pall Mall Place. He most good-naturedly handed them out at once, and then gazed out of the window at the kitchen-maids at the Marlborough while Ethel tried them on. She looked so nicely in them. although I had to give her an inch or two

in the back seam. Another striking "divided" costume was worn by Doris Bainbridge, who went as a *débardeuse*, a sort of Parisian female bargee, although her picture hat, smothered with humming-birds and pink chrysanthemums, was a trifle out of character. Still she always carries herself well in male costume, which may be accounted for by the fact that she has almost always "got 'em on," being a perfectly indefatigable cyclist. Which reminds me that she was out on her bicycle in a fearfully out-of-the-way part of Derbyshire the other day when she noticed that, by a landslip, a great quantity of rock had fallen across the metals of the railway. She rode forward with all her might, hoping to reach the signalman's box in time to avert an accident; but ere she had covered a mile, she espied an on-coming train. Thinking of nothing but saving life, she literally tore off her red satin knickers and waved them before the approaching locomotive. The engine rocked from side to side for a moment, then fell over on the tender, rolled down an embankment, and buried itself in a ditch, killing the fireman and seriously injuring the stoker.

Included in the hosts of smart people I noticed were Mr "Roddy" Menzies, who came as "A

Fried Whiting," a recent bride from Lupus Street looking awfully well in amber and vermillion, the irrepressible "Tommy" Small as "An American Kitchener," whilst the blonde beauty from Upper Gloucester Place, looking very *chic* in emerald green and gold, with salmon *chiffon* bows, came on from the Empire. But quite the success of the night in the way of toilettes was a robin's-egg satin, with alternate rows of violet and silver pompoms round the corsage. I saw this on a tall girl, who wore tiger-lilies in her auburn hair. I fancy the back of the bodice was finished *à la Watteau*, but could hardly make out distinctly, as it was somewhat disarranged where Mr Neil Forsyth and a constable were grabbing it as they hurried its wearer outside.

So much time did I spend in jotting down all these things for your edification, Madge, that we were quite late for supper, and encountered a fearful crush in the feeding-room—so much so, indeed, that all I could get was a hot plate and an orange, and as I had previously had fourteen sherries and bitters to cultivate an appetite, this was not very satisfying. I was consoled, however, by meeting Harold Osborne, that tall, good-looking boy, who went out to Old Calabar

just about the time that I left Somerset Street. He had changed greatly, dear, and had, moreover, a "secret sorrow," all about which he insisted on telling me.

"It is nearly two years ago now," he began, "and we were camped many miles above Sapele, on the Benin River, in a place called Alligator Creek. To a little woman like yourself, who has not spent much time in the tropics, it is hard to convey an accurate idea of the awful climate out there. From sunrise to sunset the blistering heat bakes and shrivels up every living thing, and there's no getting away from it. Exertion of any kind is quite out of the question in that stifling, weakening, humid——"

"But your nights were cool?" I interrupted.

He took the well-meant hint, scarcely with the good grace of one who would become a successful *raconteur* in noisy or crowded places, and proceeded in a practised manner, that told me he had already unbosomed himself to somebody before I came along —

"Our nights *were* cool," said he; "and then it was that I reflected on the *motif*, as it were, of the second chapter of Genesis—'It is not good that man should be alone.' Now, amongst the friendly tribes that fattened on our flour in

consideration of leading our blue-jackets in circles in the surrounding dense forests, was the seventeen-year-old daughter of a great chief. They called her Ym, which means, in the native dialect, 'Can -take-as-much-cuddling-as-a -wooden-leg-'ll-stand poulticing." To see her was to love her, and I will admit that, in more than one sense, I saw a good deal of her."

Here he paused for a moment, as though to let the sunshine of the recollection disperse some of his present civilised gloom. Presently he continued—

"I went and saw her father, who might have picked up the art of trading in Middlesex Street itself; he was a real bit of hard shell! Finally I got her for two cows, a suit of light thread pyjamas that needed dry-docking, an old bezique-marker (now a valued ju-ju and much sacrificed over), the latchkey of a *maisonnette*, Pelham Crescent way, and a blue glass soda-water syphon. And she was mine—all mine!"

Again he pulled up and hugged himself. Then he went on—

"My joy for a year was more than I could find words to describe; at last it became obvious that my little Ym was about to become a mother. There was no concealment about it; in that land

of brilliant sunshine coming events threw large shadows before. In her own savage fashion she prayed that it might be a boy, in which case the child would grow up to be a great chief, as her father was. Out there, a woman who has given birth to a son feels her dignity considerably, nor does her male partner consider her overbearing if she weighs in with twins, so long as they are of the right sex. Girl babies, on the other hand, have an odd knack of disappearing suddenly."

Here he gave a deep sigh, and I felt that the worst was coming.

"When little Ym's affair became imminent, she disappeared mysteriously, as a duck that wishes to lay vanishes into a bed of rhubarb, and many days went by before I encountered a warrior of her tribe, and learned that the interesting event was over. I feared somehow to ask him about the sex of the child, but when I did, the redskin rolled up his eyes and put moist clay upon his head. In a frenzy of apprehension I started for the savage encampment. Can you imagine for one moment the sight that met my gaze?"

"Not by a sight," said I.

"My little daughter — my first born — was roasting on a spit, and little Ym was basting it!"

Shocking, dear, was it not? And now to

answer your many queries. The dull neck pain which you "find it so hard to describe" tells me very plainly that you did not take to your flannelettes at the time that I advised you to. It is sheer waste of time for me to give advice if you do not act upon it. Remember, Madge, I am older than you, and — *seniores priores*, as the ploughed young 'un from Oxford said, when his irate parent told him to go to Hades. You had better try the following :—

Take a pound and a half of unsalted lard, put it in a small saucepan, and let it gently simmer. Add three or four good Spanish olives—you can drop some into your reticule first time you are at the Glasshouse Street Bodega—some nutmeg, two tablespoonfuls of the liquor out of a piccalilli bottle, a gill of brown sherry, two teaspoonfuls of Nepaul pepper, a plate of grated Parmesan cheese, half a pint of rum, and a gill of salad dressing. Flavour to taste, and serve hot.

Until you told me that it was so, I was not aware that the bath-rooms of the flats in Ridgmount Gardens were overlooked by the back windows of the houses in Gower Street, but your cousin Belle should certainly provide her apartment with a curtain. Her contention that it does not matter, as the rude young fellows at

the opposite windows are "only medical students," is very flimsy.

As regards the other matter, much as I dislike doing it, I cannot help saying that you must place no reliance whatever in your father. The young person you met him with is no more your cousin than the man in the moon is; but she lives in Woronzow Road, and if he doesn't buy you the set of furs that you want, drop me a line, and I'll write you out a list of the latest names she has been going under. The little *coiffeur* from South Audley Street has just come round to do my hair, so, for the present, dear, believe me,—Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

FEVRIER

THE FLAT,
HALF MOON STREET.

MY DARLING MADGE,—

Isn't this weather quite too awful for words? I fancy I can hear you reply "Oh, jigger it!" as a sweet girl friend of mine, who is too lady-like to swear, and yet felt too wicked to let it alone, remarked on Wednesday afternoon, when she stepped on a loose paving-stone outside the Blue Posts, and jerked about three pints of rain-water up her pink silk stockings. And how you can endure it in Hampshire I can't think, though, as you say, there's some rough fun to be got out of putting clean blotting-paper in the bachelors' bedrooms over night, and reading what they've been writing to their best girls in town by the aid of a looking-glass in the morning.

Charlie Culpepper, the celebrated cattle-painter,

of whom I think I have told you, dropped in on me last evening, and insisted on taking me out to dinner. We strolled as far as Piccadilly Circus, uncertain where to dine. A long series of dinners at the most fashionable restaurants had worn him out, both physically and financially, he said.

"A fig for fashion and dalliance with many dishes!" cried he, "let us eat at a place where it is not considered singular, or even vulgar, to enjoy one's food."

"And where may that be?" I asked, a little nervously I may confess.

The hoarse voice of a man in a shabby suit of tweed and a broken billycock hissed in our ears as he brushed past: "Harris's, the sausage shop!"

So strange and sudden was this reply that it momentarily startled us both.

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Culpepper, "it's Joskin—Joskin who came to grief in the Ninety-Sixth!" and without another word we went after him.

"Ah, Charlie! ah, Maude! I didn't think you'd have recognised me. I must pull this old bowler further over my eyes in future, or it'll be Katie-bar-the-door for Augustus Joskin!" he said when we caught him up and laid friendly hands on him.

Odd as we thought his words, we did not press him for an explanation there and then, but, deeming the excellent Sausageries too far, bore him, not unwillingly, across the busy roadway, through the asphalted courtyard, and into the grand salon of the Café Monico.

I had not set eyes on the place in ten long years, and still all seemed the same. The pier-glasses reaching to the ceiling, with the film of a humid evening still upon them, the familiar click-click of many dominoes being mixed up on the marble tables, the obese old gentleman smoking the elongated cigarro with the spinal column of straw—how intimate I was with all of it!

A waiter, who would have looked well in gold ear-bobs, accepted our order, which was, to begin with, *hors d'œuvres*, one portion consisting of many capers and a fillet of the gregarious and social anchovy between three; and while, with seeming unconcern, he dismissed our contemplated meal from his memory, in order to make out the "addition" of a beautiful lady who had been outside, presumably to see what had won the first race, and was now pulling on her dainty suède gloves, Joskin gave us an explanation of his mysterious conduct.

"Ah, incomparable Côte d'Or at three bob!" he soliloquised, replenishing his glass from the bottle I had ordered as a sample. "Oh, insidious tippie of the Bourgogne, it is on thy account that I pull my hat across mine eyes as I traverse the narrow boulevard called Sherwood and the Rue Denman!"

We watched him raise the goblet to his lips and drain it to the dregs.

"Mine is a hard case," he went on, "far more indurate and flinty than any that Tommy Bowles' readers have been called upon to solve. It happened like this—"

But at this juncture our Swiss *garçon* returned with one of our three plates in his left hand, and the other two spread up his left arm. On each was a delicious gas-heated and glazed chop, nestling amongst eighteen or twenty brunette chips of oil-fried potatoes, and Joskin, who is fairly quiet save when partaking of meals, fell to with a will. I don't know that I don't like Joskin's style of eating; it dissipates the silence and renders the poverty of the conversation less apparent. In these days a dinner may often be remembered, not for its *bon mots* or the tooth-someness of the *appétissant* and *luisant* salad, but because Smith or Jones had a style of eating, or

a new way of whistling up waiters with the fingers, that attracted attention.

"As I was telling you," said Joskin presently, bolting his last chip of potato and wiping up the superfluous Worcester sauce on his plate with a fragment of roll, "I was making my way to my unfashionable lodging in Bloomsbury in the darkness the other morning, when a feminine voice hailed me with : ' Shar-lee ! Shar-lee ! ' and though, as you may know, my front names are Augustus Havelock Simpson, I felt impelled to stop. I cannot truthfully say I was acquainted with the lady in pink and pearl-grey satin who then appeared, but she seemed a hospitable soul, suggested that a glass of the *bon vin*—you remember the old chant"—and Joskin sang softly :

" ' Venez, venez, sages et fous,
Venez, venez, boire avec nous
Le bon vin a quat' sous——' "

' Oh yes," we asserted, " but go on."

" Well," continued Joskin, " we ascended a dark staircase hard by, and entered an elegant apartment on the first floor. I will not attempt to describe the artistic arrangement of the furniture, but there were two elegant, long-necked, China vases, that stood on either side

of a doubtless costly shade of wax flowers on the plush mantel, that particularly attracted my attention. My amiable hostess produced a bottle of the *bon vin* from a curious pedestal cupboard, and we sat down to talk of Montmartre, and I even recalled stray bits of Béranger and other authors. Now the *bon vin* was strong, the room was very warm, and I am not quite clear as to what happened, but I do know that I dozed in an armchair, and, that whilst so dozing, my hostess dipped the lily fingers of her right hand into the watch-pocket of my waistcoat, where reposed three half-sovereigns — my very last. For some inexplicable reason I did not resent this, didn't even open my half-closed eyes till she turned her back, crossed the salon more than ever on the pointed toes of her varnished *bottes*, and dropped my gold down the neck of one of the queer vases that mounted sentinel over the wax flowers. Oho! thought I, this is an emergency that calls for strategy. I awoke, drowsily, lazily. I apologised to my charming hostess for going to sleep—the *bon vin* never did agree with me. I ought not to have touched it, for my grandfather was gouty, and I begged the favour of a glass of water. Aha! She left the room! Hastily grabbing the long-necked

vase from the mantel, I inserted its mouth into my trousers' pocket and inverted it. A merry jingle followed; then I replaced the vessel, and fell back into the armchair, just as the charming mademoiselle returned with a little water in a breakfast-cup."

"So you recovered your thirty bob?" the cattle-painter and I enquired in one breath.

"That's just the point," responded Joskin sadly; "I recovered *twenty-seven pounds ten*, the poor girl's savings of a lifetime, maybe!"

There was a pained pause, rendered all the more so by the appearance of the *garçon* with his tablet of accounts.

"What should *I* do?" asked Joskin, as though he were *Vanity Fair* itself.

"Endeavour to meet the lady again," said I.

"Return twenty-six pounds by *some* means at once," said the cattle-painter decisively.

"Alas!" cried the unhappy Joskin, "I took it to Sandown on Saturday."

"All togezzer?" asked the waiter. Charlie replied in the affirmative, and this, as "Autolycus" says in the *Pall Mall*, was the bill:

"*Hors d'œuvres*, 6d.; *three chop au pommes frit*, 3s.; *one bottle côte d'or*, 3s.; *three rolls and butters*, 6d.; *total*, 7s."

Ethel Kingsford and Johnny Branson are friends again, which I am sure you will be delighted to hear, for, as Johnny doesn't drop his h's, and certainly isn't a teetotaler, there is always the chance that he may turn out to be a gentleman when we get to know him better. Curiously enough, the reunion was effected through the unconscious instrumentality of the Salvation Army. Johnny learned at the Continental that Ethel had moved to the Avenue Road, but nobody knew her number; also he discovered when he got there that the Avenue Road was a very long road, and to knock up the inhabitants one by one was out of the question. So, mindful of having encountered the Salvation Army as he came along, he borrowed a tin tea-tray of a waiter at the Swiss Cottage, and started down the thoroughfare that held his lost darling with a "Bang! Bang!! Biff!! Bang!!—Hally-looyer! Hally-looyer!!" Every individual female in that road came flying to the window to see what the ruction was, and in less than two minutes Johnny had spotted the object of his visit, looking charming in a tea-gown of purple *crêpe de chine*, with an orange plush butterfly caught in her auburn hair, and

had resigned his commission in the Army and the tea-tray most cheerfully.

I know, dear, how an absolutely exclusive item of Court Intelligence always delights you, and I have saved you one. Let me tell you that during the service of dinner at Windsor Castle the band of the Coldstreams plays on the terrace, just outside the dining-room window, and Her Majesty has remarked that the cornet solos are frequently slurred. It transpires that the side-table from which the courses are served is directly in the line of sight of the cornet-bandsman, and as he avers that he can't help his mouth watering, he has been given the option of playing in blinkers or handing in his band-parts.

How beautiful a thing is sympathy, and how blessed it is to be able to tender it to one in distress! Even a man's sympathy for other men is goodly and helpful at times, but, of course, what men really need is women's sympathy—sympathy in their work, sympathy in their bereavements, sympathy in their physical ailments, sympathy when they are too late in the betting-market, sympathy in their spiritual anxieties, sympathy in their baldness, sympathy in their amorous eccentricities,

sympathy in the time of senile decay—wide, deep, enduring, womanly sympathy. Oh! there is something beautiful in sympathy—in manly sympathy, in motherly sympathy, in wifely sympathy! Let him tell the story who, when all his fortunes were gone and all the world was against him, came home and found in that home a wife who, in his absence, had dressed up as a widow, and raised a bill of sale on the furnished apartments, in order that “her boy” should have an evening meal of lamb’s heads and brain sauce. Who will put that weary head upon the clean, white pillow, and wonder—wonder, through the long, long night, why a man who has partaken of raw onions in a Russian salad should imagine that he can remove all traces of the same by the free use of the Pollok Blend—who, who, I ask, but a sweet, sympathetic wife?

But let us not rest at being mere theorists in the matter; the greatest crime in the criminal code of Heaven, brethren, is a man living unto self.

I have just had a visit from a very nice boy, whom you have not yet met, I think, for he has only recently left Oxford. He came to see me dressed in the deepest of mourning, and looking—oh, *so* sad! He seemed fearfully depressed, and

I secretly admired him for it, as it is not often nowadays that a boy shows so much grief at the death of his grandmother.

"It is very terrible indeed," I said, "very, very sad."

"It is," he replied, and a greater feeling of admiration for him arose within me, which would have lasted had he not continued: "For I can't go to the Empire to-night, nor the Tivoli, but I shall have to take my cabman out to the Star, Bermondsey, or the Washington, Battersea, where nobody'll know me!"

His grandmother died quite peacefully and comfortably, he told me, being crushed to death by blacklegs against the corner of a tramcar at the Parliament Hill terminus, in trying to take a penny ride, during the first day of the Strike. I was overjoyed to hear that her end was tranquil and undisturbed, because the circumstance enabled me to tell him of quite a different sort of passing-away I remembered seeing when quite a girl. The person being scurried over the bar was a poor gentleman who got what religion he needed at a Hall of Science. For years he had made it a practice to go out on a Saturday night with, let me say, a comparatively virgin mind and a jug, and bringing home with him enough

doctrine to enable him to hold out till the following Saturday, and all the bitter beer he was likely to want till the public-houses opened at mid-day on Sunday. Finally a chill or something laid him by the heels, and, whilst lying in hospital, he got his call. And he didn't want to go a little bit. I never saw a more reluctant man in my life; the earnest way in which he tried to think of *any* excuse to wriggle out of his last appointment was distressing. There was more eloquence in the light-hearted way in which he referred in his last moments, the while he tore up his bed-clothes, to some of the leading lights of Atheism than in a hundred modern sermons; and I fancy that his brother, who—with the bank and building societies' books, belonging to the gentleman who was sustaining the principal rôle, in his pocket—stood by, formed a hurried resolution to have another look at the book form ere he went on as an Amalgamated Acrostic, or whatever the name of the sect was.

You ask very kindly after Ursula. I am afraid, poor girl, she is in a very bad way. They discharged her as cured from the private "pay" hospital, after she had coughed down three sixteen-and-sixpenny iron bedsteads, but she has developed sad symptoms since she has been at

Ventnor. Every time she sneezes she fills her boots with sand, and I am greatly afraid she is going to "chuck in her knife and fork," as Charlie says. It is very dreadful when one looks back and recalls her in her best days—tall, brunette, commanding, with that delicate tracery of dark hair on her upper lip, although I never quite thought she was justified in removing her boot in the Café Monico to take a swat at a foreign waiter because he inadvertently brought her chocolate in a moustache-cup.

—*Loujours à toi, darling.*

MAUDE.

MARS

HOTEL METROPOLE, BRIGHTON.

SWEET COUSIN,—

It is wicked, no doubt, for me, still in the bloom and fluff of life's young morn, to find fault with the weather, but I freely confess that the present sample is a trifle *too* "brass-monkey." As one result of slipping down the beach steps here after treading on an icicle, I am nursing a bruised knee-pan and a nasty bump as nearly as possible over the organ of firmness. Still, there is plenty of cheery company here. Aubrey Plantagenet has only just gone out. What a delightful man he is! Language is to him a gift, and he spoke so correctly, so fluently, and so grammatically, that it was almost a relief to hear the plumber's man, who is at work just outside my chamber window, violate one or other of Lindley Murray's rules with a coarse but refreshing oath, as he spilled a gill or so of white hot solder into his shoe-top.

After dinner last evening Charlie and I and four or five other guests, who could find nothing in Brighton worth the trouble of going out to see, sat in the big wicker chairs on the hotel steps and chatted. Two great characters we have here are a certain Doctor Foxton (a little bantam of a medico, who retired a few years back on a fortune left him by a grateful spinster who had been a patient), and a fine old salt, a Captain Stripp, on the half-pay list.

Little Doctor Foxton had been describing, with daring but delightful minuteness, some handsome Algerian women he had seen in a dancing-hall in Tunis, and just as he wound up by declaring that they were the finest women in the world, old Captain Stripp jumped in and punctuated the exordium with the bluff monosyllable: "Rats!"

The captain is not as a rule a rude man, so we attributed his vehemence to the probability of his having a good case of his own to state; nor were we wrong, as it turned out.

"Out in the Bahamas only two years ago," he said, "I came across a group of the loveliest women I have ever seen, an' they didn't have no muslins, nor silks, nor, indeed, a cool stitch of anything to set them off, for they were just bathin' in a creek. I went out there as an expert in

fibres. The woods of the Bahamas yield just the varieties of fibres required by electrical engineers, and I'd got a nailin' good payin' appointment to go out there and make a complete collection an' report on 'em. You see, with fibres——"

"We'll take the fibres as read," interrupted little Doctor Foxton, who began to show unmistakable signs of getting deeply interested.

"Oh, you will? All right; then we'll give the pannerammer another twist. The Bahamas, you may know, have been almost depopulated by the Spanish buccaneers under Don Ricardo Colorado y Maduro, but I was forcin' my way well up into the wooded districts, where the giant gums wave to and fro, and you hardly ever hear a sound save when a bird cries out to its mate in the great canebrake, or the splash of a birch canoe being rowed through the clear water. When I say *clear* water, I'm not speakin' strictly by the chart, for it's tinted slightly by the roots of juniper and cypress——"

"Just so, just so," interrupted the doctor, rather sharply, "but—er—get on to the story."

"You can hardly call it a story," quibbled old Stripp; "it would be more appropriate to call it an incident."

"Call it an incident, then," grunted the doctor
"dammit, call it an incident!"

"Very well, we will. These Bahama people have a sort of natural odour about 'em. I dunno whether it's from bathin' in the water impregnated with the juniper——"

"They don't bathe at all!" declared Charlie, starting in and dropping his eyeglass from its orbit; "nobody ever heard of a Bahaman takin' a bath, but he rubs himself with oil all over, till he stinks worse than a burning boot!"

"I didn't say a Bahaman," cried the captain, "but the Bahama *maidens*, girls of eighteen or so——"

"That's right—or, at least, it's probable," chipped in Billie Winn. "Sir Edwin Arnold has written of the delicious natural odour of the Japanese girls; don't you remember the rhyme somebody wrote:—

"'Oh, the Tokio maid is in sweetness arrayed
From her little pink toe to her cranium,
With eyes black as sloes, and a breath like a rose,
And a——'

——er—oh, dammit——"

"'And a cough like a lemon geranium,'"

Charlie suggested.

"Yes, yes—or words to that effect," assented Billy. "Pardon these interruptions, Captain."

"Oh, that's all right," said old Stripp good-naturedly; "if you've quite done, I'll go on. One day I was out fibrein', when, at a sudden turn in the path, I beheld such a bevy of beautiful girls as I'd never seen before—they were simply copper-coloured angels! I heard subsequently that they were a renowned band of Amazons, whose mothers had got up a little sort o' smokin' concert one night for Colorado-Maduro's buccaneers. They were walking along at a smartish pace, which caused quite a rustle, for you must know that their only clothes—a sort of loose jacket and short drawers—are made of a sort of manilla paper, as fine, and bleached as white, as a bishop's lawn sleeves. I skirts along at the side o' the wood——"

"Yes, go on," said the little doctor, giving his chair a hitch.

"Till they comes to a little creek," continued the captain, "and here, amidst a good deal o' laughin', they begins to undress. Their jackets only appeared to have one button, just on the left shoulder, whilst the — er — that is the other things——"

"What things?" said the little doctor peevishly.

"Why, what I told you before, were off in a jiffey. Smoly Hoke! thinks I——"

"Never mind what you thought," said the doctor. "Go on."

"Right. Well, never had I seen girls so perfectly formed, and I was just speculatin' as to what I ought to do——"

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated the doctor impetuously.

"When," went on old Stripp, unheeding the excited medico, "when they caught sight o' me! Led by the tallest girl o' the lot—b'gosh, she *was* a picture!—they came running up to me, puttin' their arms, some round me neck, some round me legs, an' kissin' me for all they were worth. They were literally on all sides o' me——"

"Well?" demanded the impatient doctor.

"With a desperate effort," cried the old captain, throwing his arms about dramatically as though struggling with an unseen foe, "I disengaged myself, and, throwing the hoydens right and left, took to my hee——"

"It's a lie!" fairly shouted the excited doctor, jumping up and kicking over his chair. "It's a foul, contemptible, mean, despicable lie!" and he bounced into the hotel. Strangely enough, when Charlie went inside a few minutes later to get my

sables, he overheard one of the hotel clerks, who held a *Bradshaw* in his hand, replying to some query of Doctor Foxton's.

"There appear to be two or three routes, sir," said the clerk, "*via* Cuba or Puerto Rico, and the fares are about the same. When do you wish to start?"

But just then the fiery little disciple of Æsculapius caught sight of Charlie.

"I—I—I—I'll think it over," he said to the clerk, and, without stopping at the flower-stall for his customary buttonhole, he hurried out.

Brighton seems very full, if not exactly of smart people, certainly of children and dogs. November and December babies, each attended by two nurses and a boy in buttons, are extremely fashionable, whilst slightly older children look awfully well when wearing sun-bonnets hanging down their backs. The dogs, largely attracted I presume, by the laxity of the muzzling laws down here, could well be dispensed with on the beach, where they have amply demonstrated themselves to be cake-and-bun-stealers, child-biters, feeding-bottle suckers, and everything else that is abominable.

Mrs Switchley-Danvers is here, being pulled about on the front—(this reads curiously, some-

how)—in a bath-chair, as she says, for “acute nervous prostration.” Nonsense! How could the wife of a mere ex-fire insurance agent have such a disease? It is a plain bilious attack. Another visitor, looking *really* ill, poor girl, is Henrietta Treadwater. She has been endeavouring to support herself and her aged mother, who is about to celebrate her golden wedding by becoming a barmaid at the Criterion, by writing bright little poems for the papers. She sought to submit this one—

“What is the use of breaking a heart,
If you don't intend to tarry?
What is the use of wooing a ‘tart’
If you never intend to marry?
What is the use of a novelette
If you don't intend to read it?
What is the use of a bassinette
If you never intend to need it?”

—to the cultured editor of *The Gentlewoman*, but was told at his office that he had gone to Coomassie to arrange about some new composition for the printing-ink rollers. She still has good friends who will help her, however; and if a girl can retain her friends during her periods of prolonged poetical thought, she need not fear of losing them should she

contract scarlet fever or the small-pox. She only regrets, now that she seems likely to be temporarily prostrated on a bed of sickness, that she so rashly tore up her pretty old-rose silk night-dresses and hemmed them into handkerchief squares for "that bounder" (as she expresses herself) with whom she was pleased to consider herself in love last summer. It is somewhat consoling to her to know that whenever he blew his nose he was so filled with distracting emotions, that he generally ran amuck, and was, in consequence, eventually dispensed with by the Frost-bitten Race-course and Postponed Irish-Stew Syndicate, of which he was to have had the managing directorship when it "came out."

It would be odd, indeed, if Brighton had not a little scandal of some sort afoot, and just now the ultra-respectable residents in Cavendish Place are greatly exercised in their minds by the conduct of a young lady visitor who has no blind to her bedroom window. *The Sussex Evening Nark* has devoted several columns to it, so the other night Charlie and I walked round to the locality shortly after 11.30, and got into conversation with an intelligent Brighton police-constable, who was leaning languidly against the iron railings of a house opposite to "the show." "Oh yes, sir,"

He replied to Charlie's enquiry, "it's just precisely the same every night, but I don't see much harm in it. She always douses the glim before it gets too sensational." Raising our eyes to the second floor front window we gazed in horror at the shadow of the young lady, evidently unbuttoning her outer garments. She next removed her hat and feathers, and discarded her hair-net. We plainly discerned her in the act of hanging a scarlet cotton "improver" over the bust of General Booth, which stood upon the mantelpiece, and heard her throw her corsets into the coal-scuttle. At this juncture she approached the window, and, with a merry, decisive laugh, blew out the rushlight. Candidly, I think too much fuss is being made about the matter, especially by the railway people, who contemplate, if the young lady intends stopping here another fortnight, putting on a late train to Hassocks, Burgess Hill, Preston Park, and Bramber.

Poor Mrs and Miss Smith, with whom I used to stay in German Place, are, I observe, to be sold up under the bill-of-sale, on the proceeds of which they started. Frail little Mrs Smith, with her widow's bands and her gentle, ingenuous ways, ought never to have started a "board-and-residence" menagerie, and that, too, with such a

tiny capital, raised at such a ruinous rate. Not hers the power to cope with the wily milk-pudding-fattened boarder, and wring from him the hard-held scudi with which to appease a clamorous sixty-per-center.

One of the first prospective patrons to pull their visitors' bell was a Mr Solomon Hyams, and it was on a dire day, one on which Mrs Smith's little cherub had left off sitting up aloft, and gone to see his arrows-maker, for Mr Hyams was so well pleased with the "board and residence," that he forthwith installed himself for the full course at forty shillings a week. Now, it appears that as he came downstairs on the second evening after his arrival, in all the glory of evening dress, he encountered the graceful daughter of the house, and in a studied tone of indifference to expense, which jarred somewhat with the surroundings, asked :

"Oh—er—Mith Thmith—I'm—er—dinin' out to-night. I forgot to athk vhen I come 'ere, but—er—vhat deducthion d'yer make vhen a guetht thtays out?"

Miss Smith was, for a second, embarrassed. Neither she nor her mamma had anticipated the raising of such a point. However, she would ask, and she ran downstairs to do so, the while

Mr Myer Solomon Hymans dreamily dipped his fingers into the ticket-pockets of the other boarders' overcoats for loose coppers, for, as he said, "it alwayth gitth put down to the dithonethy o' th' thervanth."

When Miss Smith returned she said, quite with a blush, poor girl, that her mamma thought it was unusual to make such allowances, nevertheless, if Mr Hyams wished it, she would deduct two shillings for each meal missed, and two shillings for each night's lodging.

From that night forward the seventeen other nincompoops, who ate to repletion at seven, and burnt the gas till one, in their endeavours to raise the "Parlour Game" of "Tiddleywinks," or jerking the cardboard to the level of the sciences, saw rather less than usual of Mr Myer Hyams, though, to do them justice, they filed no objections on that head. And when three whole weeks had passed, Miss Smith made out a little bill and left it on Mr Hyams' dressing-table—"Three weeks' board and residence, as arranged, £6."

It was then that Mr Hyams, who must have been the gold-medal mathematician of the Ghetto, weighed in with his little contra-account. Out of a possible eighty-four meals he had eaten only

fourteen, whilst on eleven nights he had slept out; thus seventy meals at 2s. represented £7, and eleven lodgings at a similar rate £1, 2s., which left a balance in his favour of two guineas!

To say that the widow and her daughter were somewhat flummuxed when the lodger sent down *his* bill would be to put the matter very mildly, and if they did not say a great deal, it was principally because, being ladies, and used to nothing stronger than the Communion Service, they had not the flow of language on hand that would have done justice to the subject. And, after all, as Mr Hyams very truly put it, a business arrangement is a business arrangement, though he magnanimously added :

“ Seein’ that it’th unpertected vimin I’ve got to deal vith, I don’t vish to preth yer for the balanth in money ; *I’ll take it out in board !* ”

Charlie has just come round from the livery stable in Cannon Place with such a spirited pony in such a beautiful yellow Ralli cart, and declares I am to drive him to Rottingdean and back. Where’s the old brandy?—*Au revoir, chérie.*

MAUDE.

AVRIL

THE FLAT, TUESDAY.

MY DARLING MADGE,—

You have to thank a pair of cerise and primrose garters—neither more nor less—for this *billet*. They caught my eye this afternoon as I wandered through the Burlington, and the ticket affixed to them, “For the Epsom Week,” awakened quite a train of delightful old memories in my head, dear, as it certainly should do in yours, too.

Gazing critically at the silk lingerie displayed in the self-same window, was that Aldershot fellow, Jocelyn-Johnson, I think they call him—we remarked, you may remember, that he parted both his hair and his name in the middle—and he carried me off to the dear old “Blue Posts” to tell me the latest bit of news. He’s going to marry — positively *marry* — Minnie Godden! Certain things happened, it appears, after which she found out all about his gov’nor and his

people, and, as he cannot stand an *exposé* at home, he is taking the unpleasant alternative. As he very tersely put it, gazing sadly into his tumbler the while, she's "got him where his hair's short." Poor devil! Yet Dolly Dixon, who used to share the same dressing-room at the Gaiety as Minnie, tells me he's a very poor catch—which I'm sorry to hear, for they say that Minnie used to throw rolling-pins, crockery, or anything that came to hand, at her first mash.

What will a girl *not* take on in order to get hitched to a man in the regulation way? Will she stop at *anything*? Let me give you an instance. The youngest daughter of the wife of a very—very—dear friend of mine, received a proposal of marriage the other day, but before giving her answer, determined to visit her four married sisters. The eldest, who had been the belle of her year at home, she found in a garret in Lisson Grove, slaving at dressmaking to support herself and an anonymous baby, which slept blissfully upon some straw bottle-envelopes in an otherwise empty champagne case in a corner; the second, who had made a bad match for one who gets married altogether without display, would have been up the river with her husband and a portable cottage piano, but that he was wearing a chunk of

fresh rump-steak over one eye, as the result of an argument with a gentleman, who played on a harp, as to a right of pitch outside Tagg's Hotel at Molesey; the third (whose husband had gone to Doncaster with a white hat turned up with green, a satchel, a book and an ashplant) was taking iron for her blood at a French Laundresses in Shaftesbury Avenue; and the fourth was hanging about the Law Courts waiting till her decree *nisi* was done.

Upon this she wired to the young fellow to say that she'd be ready by the 1st of May!

I daresay you remember me telling you that Lenore Lennox had taken a sweetly pretty villa—one in a terrace of about twenty—at South Hampstead. She has a regular allowance now; and her little boy—such a darling little fellow!—being just six years old, she passes as the wife of a cavalry officer who is away with his regiment. He is such a delightful little cherub, too, with long golden curls clustering round his baby brow. Oh, how hateful the thought that he may grow up and some day become, perhaps, a bookmaker! How sickening the reflection that, say twenty years hence, his baby legs may be employed in taking him across Ascot Heath at a 4.12½ gait and a lead of about fifteen yards of an angry

Jaquemart mob, on whom he has tried to ring a Knight of the Thistle argument in lieu of settlement !

However, I called on poor Lenore the other afternoon, and called at a most unfortunate moment, as it happened, for I found her in a swoon, with her fair head in an ormolu coal-vase, and her two maids busily unlacing her *corset parfait* and applying restoratives. It appears that in one of his baby excursions all over the house, little Hector found a packet of mamma's old letters tied round with a cherry ribbon, and an ingenious idea entered his infant mind that he would play at "postman." This consisted in stealing outdoors with the packet, giving double knocks at the neighbours' doors, and delivering the letters with "Tuppence to pay, p'ease." Of course the letters were old, old ones of Charlie Throatlash's, and if you knew anything of Charlie's breezy style of correspondence with a woman he loves, you'd agree with me that none who paid "tuppence" for a *billet-doux* will want any more ripe fruit this year. Charlie, in writing, generally let the tail go with the hide, and, when he was much smitten, illustrated !

Periodically one hears an impassioned feminine wail about the dearth of good domestic servants

—or even of unclassified domestics—and I must say that I do not wonder at it when one hears of mistresses like Mrs Hynton-Budbrooke. She has a weakness, you must know, dear, for taking criminals by the hand—"giving them another chance"—she calls it, and is never so happy as when she discovers a parlour-maid at a lying-in hospital or a footman at a thieves' supper. She has just taken one of the last-named into her house, and her coachman came here in tears yesterday—poor man!—to see if I could recommend him for a vacancy anywhere. It appears that the terrible creature Mrs Budbrooke has just put into livery was some sort of racecourse microbe, and hadn't been in the house two hours before he was thumping the butler in his own pantry—(the Hynton-Budbrookes were out at dinner)—because he wouldn't "find the lady." Nor did Mrs Budbrooke turn him instantly from the doors when she came in. Certainly she spoke seriously to him, but begged the butler to assist her in reforming the "social outcast"—a thankless task to a man who has already incurred a bump on the temple of the size of a roc's egg, and a splodge of colour like a Lotofen sunset under the left eye. The very next day the creature "gamdiddled" (that was the coachman's word)

the stableman out of his corn money, and wound up on the Saturday by taking the page-boy's few shillings off him, teaching him how to play a game called "Crusoe." Is not such a fad deplorable?

Speaking of servants, by the way, I called on dear Mrs Mortimer-Toddpush the other day in her charming suite at the Hotel Lofty at Brighton, and while I was there her bell was answered by one of the most diminutive and cherub-like page-boys I think I have ever seen. He was new to Mrs Mortimer-Toddpush, too, for she asked him, as she passed her jewelled left hand over his smooth golden hair, how old he was.

"Thirteen, ma'am," said the boy.

"And what is your name?"

"Joseph, ma'am."

"*What?*" she asked again.

"Joseph, ma'am."

"Oh, nonsense!" she cried, "I shall call you William; you are entirely too young at present for a Joseph!" Then she drew the little fellow to her and imprinted on his lips one of those hot, passionate, blistering kisses she knows so well how to give.

And what an art kissing is, dear Madge,

and how many volumes of meaning may be crowded into what Oliver Wendell Holmes called a "lispering consonant." It was with a kiss that, hundreds of years ago, Cleopatra won Marc Antony; it was with a kiss that, only the other day, King Prempeh resigned his kingdom. And though somebody in Parliament observed, with regard to the submission of poor Prempeh, that there was a difference of opinion between the two front benches as to the portion of Sir F. Scott's person which the monarch kissed, the fact remains that a kiss it was. Perhaps it is just as well that modern men rarely take the trouble to become proficient, for as soon as a man shows that he knows how to kiss, a woman begins to think he has a lurid "past."

And yet we have a whole day annually devoted to the pastime, for it fell on Tuesday last. I must tell you that I had just settled down for my post-breakfast read, and was rapidly becoming absorbed in that chaste and beautiful hotel story of a young man who ascended in his stockinged feet and the dead of night to the head barmaid's bedroom, in order to discuss with her the spiritual advantages to be gained by adopting a purely vegetable diet as an aid to leading

the higher life, all so artlessly related in "A Pink 'Un and a Pelican," when that pretty boy i told you I met in Piccadilly on St Valentine's day—as a matter of fact our bodies did meet, physically, and with a positive crash that started my nose bleeding, for he was looking behind him, and I was admiring the set of my new grey and *pervenche* blue costume reflected in a shop window—dropped in and begged me to go with him to the "Hocktide" kissing ceremonies at Hungerford, where a couple of middle-aged "tutty-men," decked out in ribbons and laurels like Ritualistic churches at Christmas, go all round the town demanding kisses from the wives and daughters of the burgesses.

Revolting! But he is one of those simple, free-trade-in-everything sort of boys that see no harm in anything, and he even told me in confidence—as he might have done a slightly elder sister—that he jolly well knew that his girl at the Gaiety was being mashed by another Johnnie, but he didn't mind, because the other fellow was "such an *awfully* decent old chappie, don't you know, and the joke of it is, that we are both getting our chips from the same money-lender!"

Between doing the society gossip for *The*

Hostess At Home and dashing off short, impassioned stories for one or other of the ladies' magazines, Mrs Mortimer-Toddpush gets along very nicely, although having no family of her own causes her to write odd paragraphs in her "home" notes occasionally. For instance, she said the other day in *The Hostess*: "Little boys' suits now consist of three pieces instead of two, as formerly, which is an excellent arrangement, as it enables the parent to get at the little boy more readily whenever occasion requires."

Her short stories, however, are above all criticism, as I think you will admit after reading one of her latest, which she calls—

"A BRIGHTON ARCH.

"'Only five minutes more,' soliloquised the beautiful brunette in the purple velvet and silver fox-fur toilette, as she replaced her tiny gold and diamond-encrusted watch in its clasp, and gazed out over the purring indigo waves, 'and my Adolphus will be with me.'

"From the bosom of her dress she drew a crumpled envelope—an envelope addressed to her own initials, care of a wily circulating librarian in

the Western Road, and, drawing a sheet of note-paper from within, read :—

“‘TO MY QUEEN.

“‘Oh! how I miss your sweet kisses, and your fond
caressing,

Which somehow seem to set *my* soul athirst to drink
from *your* soul,

From that bubbling fountain of love which seems to
be squirting its blessing

Into my life's Sahara, my life, my whole!

—‘FROM SYLVIA'S SABREUR.’

“As she thrust the note back into its hallowed receptacle she walked uneasily to the railing of the roof-terrace of the Pier Pavilion, muttering passionately to herself:

“‘Oh, optimistic fool that I am, to go on with this! It is not possible for two persons of our passionate and artistic temperament to maintain a platonic correspondence, and, though my husband is not strict with me, should one of Adolphus's *billets*—but some one approaches.’

“There appeared as she spoke at the top of the iron staircase a tall, aristocratic man of soldierly bearing, not the blustering trooper of the camp, but the romantic subaltern who loves to accompany a girl to her *corsetière's*, or her boot-makers, to tell her how her things should fit her.

He was in evening dress, save for the snuff-brown deerstalker which Brighton allows. He stepped quickly across to Sylvia, and slipped his right arm round her waist."

" 'My own!'

" 'My Dolphy!'

During the next three minutes they kissed but twice—two long-drawn kisses that died away with a sound like the tearing off of a porous plaister. Then he said:

" 'And the Ogre, where *is* he to-night, little one?'

" 'The creature,' she said, her beautiful nostrils dilating with disgust, "wires me that in celebration of the rise in Chilians, whatever they may be, a "lot of fellows in the House" are dining together at Romano's, and going on to "The Belle of New York," so that he'll sleep in town.'

" 'Then my angel is my own till——'

" 'Ten, dearest, not a moment after. The brougham will be at the Dome at ten—the *Elisha* concert is on to-night—but we can walk there leisurely, lovingly, partly by way of the beach, but you may not kiss me at parting.'

"His countenance fell a little at these words. After all, it was prudence and not indifference that prompted them.

"Still, wise and necessary as they were, they only served to remind him of the hopelessness of their joint love. He had a little to live on, enough to support them in comfort, but there was the insurmountable object of her wretched stock-broking husband; it was a stile that there seemed no prospect of getting over.

"*'Sylvia, my darling,'* he said sadly, *'only you know how much I love you, and yet it is impossible for me to go on pouring out my very soul to you, either under the eyes and noses of the natives and their visitors, or through the medium of the post. I cannot go on writing to you for ever about the desert, the fountains, and the meteorological outlook; moreover, this love is making our lives one continual yearn. If we only had some nook, some bower where, unseen by vulgar eyes——'*

"*'Why not take an arch?'* said she.

"An arch—one of the cosy little nooks beneath the unrivalled asphalt promenade—is well nigh indispensable to a single man's outfit in Brighton. It is a warm, cosy, and secluded little stronghold, to which he can retire when the attractions of the Old Ship pail and his acquaintances in the smoking-room at the Metropole become a bore.

"So it fell that my Strephon took an arch, and furnished, decorated, and lighted it after the fashion of these archers; and every afternoon through that mellow October did his Phyllis come down there to brew tea in a little Wedgwood pot, and sit by his side the while he wrote verses to her eyes, her lips, her hair—verses which would have made a sick elephant leave his buns. Then, as twilight came on, he would draw her a little closer, and, with his right arm around her waist, he would tell her passionately, earnestly of his great and unconquerable love for her, until the quicksilver mounted to the top of the thermometer and rattled at its glass roof to be let out.

"How all this sort of thing might have balled up, as dear old Socrates says, it is difficult to conjecture, but one day a great thing happened. Chilians fell—fell with the dull, sickening thud of the young gentleman who leaned too far over the Whispering Gallery. The sharp, authentic report of a pistol rang through Throgmorton Avenue, E.C., and—Sylvia Isabel Eugenie Butterworth was a widow!

"Some said she might have waited till the headstone was up; others smiled meaningly and shook their heads. Sylvia only remained a widow

for a week—or just long enough to have a new frock and tear up a clandestine correspondence she'd been carrying on with a cycle company promoter. For the rest, let the old registry-office attendant, where, by special license, Sylvia and Adolphus 'did the rest,' speak.

"'I never see sich a go, sir,' said he. 'No sooner 'ad they got out on to the front step than she turns to 'im, an' she says: "Adolphus, now that we are one I want the key o' that arch." "The devil you do!" says he. "And what do *you* want with it?" "Nothink," says she. "But I don't mean for *you* to have it. Now we're married," she says, "we don't want any funny business." "Well," says he, "fair play is good sport; *neither* of us shall have it. Theo Wade, the house agent, shall sell the lease and the fittings, and the whole bag of tricks. Will *that* suit you?" And then, sir, she kissed him, an' the first place they stopped at on their 'oneymoon was at the 'ouse agent's!'"

Quite romantic, is it not?

Whom do suppose I met coming out of the little oyster-shop this morning? Guess? But there, you never would — Mabel Morrison, positively! She really couldn't stand Westgate she told me, there were too many invalids there.

Every one you meet, she says, asks you what *you* are "down here for." The poor creatures, she added, stand and shrug their shoulders, not so much from discontent at the fare at their respective boarding-houses, as from all-prevailing affection of the cuticle. As the hansom cabman remarked to poor Bettina de Bellevodini, when, at the end of the journey, she struggled vainly to find the hidden pocket which her dressmaker had put in some impossible back width: "When you're done scratchin' yerself, I'll thank you for my fare." Mabel seemed very despondent—although the poor little baby only lived three days—and she said as true as Heaven made little apples, if she could only steer up against some sordid but straightforward Johnnie, hanged if she wouldn't be taken to church and turn respectable, even though the bridegroom was only marrying to save money.

A pretty new boot-tree, the name of which I may possibly tell you next week, was amongst the novelties I saw in East Street this afternoon. The patentee explained to me that it entirely filled out the boots without unduly stretching them in parts, which is, I think, better than wearing the boots all night for the same purpose, and spending the price of the trees on other

things, a policy which is advocated, I see, in "How to be Happy though Poor," now selling in thousands. By the way, dearest, talking about books, be sure and get "The Sin of the Strawberry Blonde," which is just out. Oh, I do assure you, it's *real*! The chapter where Madeleine, an orphan and penniless, walks from Powick to London, and, just in sight of the lights of the metropolis, secretly divests herself of her brocaded bodice to offer it in pledge, and where the sordid pawn-broker thrusts it back across the counter with the brutal remark, "Don't take things in hot," is alone worth the six shillings at which it is published.

Though the weather is not all that could be wished, there are still many smart people to be encountered on "the Front." I noticed one well-known Supper Club *blonde* this morning, who would have looked distinguished in a skirt of *soile de Jouey*, had she not been reduced to hitching herself up against Reuben Sassoon's railings while an obliging boatman hunted round for a pearly button that had left its moorings; whilst another charming *mondaine* looked awfully well in a bright-coloured surah, made in the early Victorian style, with a hem of half-dried macadam round the full skirt. Unwilling to

give credence to the rumour circulated by a rival that one of her buckles had "gone back on her," she inclines to the *fin de siècle* fad of wearing a yellow satin garter over the left boot-heel. But, taken altogether, it was a damp, poor morning for finery.—*Toujours*, wadger darling, yours devotedly.

MAUDE.

M A I

THE GABLES, BOTTOM PARLOR.

SWEET LITTLE COZ,

That your last letter has remained so long unanswered I very much regret, but I have been idling away a fortnight in a country house, dear, and heartily glad am I to be back in town again. Breeding establishments, and village schools, and pattern cottages—with pattern cottagers inside them, including the tedious old granny, who wears a sunbonnet and an iron-grey moustache, who walked all the way to London in the Jubilee week, and takes quite a personal interest in the Queen, because “Her Ted an’ my Willie was born the same day, miss”—soon pall on one. It may be perfectly true that no place so fully realises the idea of home as a country mansion, but little Mrs Merridew is not an ideal hostess by a jugful. She lacks repose. Then, too, everybody’s comfort is sacri-

ficed to the well-being of her precious children ; she is like the Belgravian mother who was always sacking her nursery governesses. " You do not pay proper attention to the dear mites, you seem utterly incapable of looking after them," she cried pettishly, as she proceeded to invest the thirteenth nursery-maid of the season with the ancient order and insignia of the boot ; " here's Master Alexander gone and bitten his tongue again ! "

The guest should be intuitively aware, I think, that the hostess keeps a watchful eye over her comfort, without in the least degree trying to circumscribe her liberty of action, and somehow I quite failed to realise this, when Mrs Merridew asked me if I would object to having little Dorothy in my bed, as the house was so full. I do declare that child passed the night in thirty-three different positions, for I counted them—eighteen on the bed, and fifteen on the floor ! It was positively awful—indeed I only dozed off from the sheer exhaustion of being kept awake, just as Saint Peter was blowing out the last little star and day was breaking. And yet the whole country-side literally swarms with the little pests ; the whole village was kept awake on the night of my arrival by the latest " event " in the curate's

family, which took the form of twins. This cut the sixteenth and seventeenth notches in his little quiver, thirteen of which represent children still living, and the poor man—whose stipend is only eighty pounds a year—was quite distracted about it, especially as he had backed a bill, or cashed a snide cheque, or done something equally horrible and commercial, in the very reasonable expectation of his wife receiving the Queen's Bounty.

Poor fellow! the steady unchecked growth of his family bids fair to become the ultimate ruin of him. He spoke quite pathetically of his early married days, when he had but two little "olive-branches," called respectively "Alpha" and "Omega." But, unfortunately, they did not end there, so, with a heavy heart and many misgivings, he christened his third by the somewhat odd cognomen, "Errata." One could not help feeling pity—anyway *I* could not—when sitting listening to him preaching so beautifully about the immortals reposing on high, on beds of amaranth and of moly, and knowing all the time that nothing but the charitable pulpit concealed the fact that his poor, dear broadcloth trousers had been more than once patched in the postern gate.

Have you ever noticed, Madge, how lamentably poor is the library of the average country

house? All that the bookcases at Seven Beeches contained were *Baily's Magazine* up to 1874, Vol. II. of "Veterinary Remedies," a dog-eared "Ought We to Visit Her," and some permanganate crystals for making sheep-dip. Newspapers there were — well, scarcely any, though the one that I did come across interested me hugely, as I had never seen anything like it before. Its literary matter was contributed almost entirely by persons who desired to swap articles for which they had no further use for others of which they stood in need.

Here are a few examples:—

MOURNING.—Young widow offers handsome black silk and crêpe walking dress, Directoire style, waist 18, only worn once, and slightly soiled by clay round bottom of skirt, for pair glacé kid 10-button boots, high heels, small 3's, or imitation Crown Derby five o'clock tea-set; or would exchange lease of cheerful vault, Abney Park, room for seven, for sapphire and diamond engaged ring; or would swap late lamented P.G.M. masonic jewels and a recipe for banana fritters, for crushed strawberry, box-cloth Empire cape.—Letters only "Poppets," Jelly's Library, Shaftesbury Avenue.

ARTISTIC.—Advertiser offers a drum of boiled oil in exchange for litho., "Meeting of Wellington and Blucher," or would give a firkin of treacle for engraving, "Magdalene."—"Artisticus," Box 67.

LITERARY.—Two vols. "Secrets of Courtship," one vol. "Dame aux Camelias," one vol. "Nana's Daughter," offered by attractive young person (twenty-two, blonde) for loan of double perambulator three afternoons per week.—Reply, "Blighted Emma," office of this paper.

FREEHOLD.—Cemetery allotment, airy situation, one minute's walk from the catacombs. Will be exchanged for brass door-plate, "Goods Removed," or small hand-truck, owner having recovered.—"Bill," 179A, Seymour Place, Stingo Lane, Marylebone.

MEDICAL.—"Medicus" offers eight-ounce bottle Hydrochlorate of Hyoscin, Dr Kelly's "Notes on a Case of a Button-Hook in the Intestines," and a "Treatise on Erythro-Melalgia," for a she-goat in milk and six pairs of socks; or would give a Casella's Clinical Thermometer and a tame wallaby for a forequarter of lamb.—"W. A. M.," London Hospital Coffee House, E.

BICYCLE.—Humber racer, all latest improvements, but hind wheel off. Will exchange for week's rest at a farmhouse.—Letters to J. B., care of Bob Watson, *Sporting Life*.

SECRETS.—Octavo copy of "Mysteries Unravelled" offered for address of respectable woman who would adopt a child.—Address in first instance "Peter Simple," Poste Restante, Charing Cross.

Mental pabulum of this vintage doubtless satisfies the peaceful, simple mind that can

tolerate existence in a country house, where the news of the outer world is taken down in weekly doses like brimstone and treacle, and the narration of the most commonplace events never fail to create surprise and evoke rustic comment, but it makes a town mouse extremely tired. For instance, one evening over the dinner-table the conversation had gradually turned to matters dramatic, and from thence to disturbances during a performance. Then simple little Mrs Merridew recalled an interruption to "The Bells," goodness knows how many years before. "Do you know," said she, "I think children at the theatre are a great nuisance. I was at the Lyceum one evening, and a woman had a baby in the pit——"

And the simple old Master of Foxhounds, who was the honoured guest that evening, was so overcome that the stud-groom, who was waiting at the table, had to lead him outside and bathe his temples with vinegar.

One great regret I experienced in leaving the country was that my coming to town temporarily broke off an acquaintance I had formed with the village postmistress, a very dear and delightful girl, who let me read all the telegrams and postal cards that came through the office.

and in many other ways afforded me endless amusement. She had a *naïf*, unofficial way of dealing with the customers, too, that often made me laugh till the tears ran down my cheeks and I had to hold my sides to save my stay-busk breaking. On the very day that I came away, for instance, one of the village maidens who had only recently become engaged, came into the little post-office to send off her first *billet-doux* to her bumpkin sweetheart, who had gone "oop to Lunnon" on some agricultural errand.

"An' please, miss," she asked, as she rolled her long and deliciously healthy pink tongue all over the little adhesive stamp, "hoo long will it be afoor I get a aa'nswer to this?"

"Well, you see, Maggie, it all depends," said the facetious little postmistress; "if, as is not unlikely, he's doing 'time,' they only let 'em write once a week, while, if he's been red-ochring the metropolis, as most young rustics do, and is dead broke, he'll have to wait until he earns, or gonophs, the price of a stamp; whilst, if he's caught the small-pox, which is very much about, they won't let him write at all. Then, of course, there's always the risk of his having picked up a fresh tart——"

But here the simple girl burst out crying and

went out, without waiting for my little friend to complete her catalogue of contingencies.

But this, after all, was hardly as rich as a certain post-card we got hold of, on which a local gentleman-farmer, who had lately left his wife—All men are vagrants by nature, and have, as they seem to suppose, a prescriptive right to wander abroad, sipping the honey from every opening flower—charged her with all sorts of roguish things hitherto undreamt of even in *my* philosophy. So anxious was my little friend to see what the addressee—who was a truly splendid specimen of intellectual womanhood, and as captivating as Aphrodite herself—just the sort of woman who could apparently hold her own either in a beauty contest, a political debate, or a scrape—would say in reply, that she sent a special messenger on horseback to deliver the card.

And what do you think the mean thing did? Positively replied *by letter!*—a big, fat letter, all sealing-waxed down, and absolutely unopenable! Wasn't it *horrid* of her? I can tell you, Madge, my little friend and I sat down together and positively *howled* with sheer vexation and disappointment.

Dear Lenore Fisher, who is "on" at the

Alhampire, came to see me to-day. She had on a hat she bought in Paris, and she looked so nicely in it. Yellow straw, with four green birds of Paradise in front, and six smaller ones to hitch up the back, and as she wears her hair in one long pigtail down her back, it's very becoming. I forgot to mention it had yellow, blue, green, and red streamers reaching to the end of her dress-improver, which was designed by Le Comte de Tochas. She always dresses in such good taste. With this *chapeau* she wears red silk gloves, and a diamond ring over them on the forefinger of her left hand. Poor Lenore! Like many another trusting girl, she has her "secret sorrow." She has never entirely got over the cruel blow that was dealt her, when that young scapegrace, Blackforde-de-Blurtonne, threw over her affections, and took his patronage elsewhere. And though he has now fallen from his former high estate, and gets but a precarious living soliciting orders for a snide firm of photographers, still she cannot steel her heart against him. Only the other night she saw him. She was supping with the worthy president of the Little Sisters' Rescue Home, at Greciano's, when he staggered in and recognised her. "Henry," she exclaimed, "come and see me to-morrow

night." He braced himself up and said in a stage whisper, which might have been distinctly heard at Saffron Walden: "I shou'd ha' done before, puss, but I've f'got yer number." "Cad!" she ejaculated, as, for the sake of impressing the president, who occasionally advances small sums to prospective "Little Sisters" whose relations with their landladies are strained, she with one hand flung the *croûte au pôt* all over him, whilst, with the other, she pressed a pass for the balcony lounge at the Alhampire into his fist. "I mean I'm in the front row of the second ballet!"

I am so sorry, dear, to learn that you suffer so from insomnia; it is very dreadful. But make up and try the following:—One gill of Hottentot brandy, two glasses of Kümmel, three or four capsicums, a splash of Lea and Perrin, and a table-spoonful of pain-killer. It should be taken at bedtime. The last dear girl I recommended to try this lived at Newmarket, and she slept slick through the Second Spring Meeting, as calmly and almost as unruffled as though she had been in the morgue. As to the other matter: unless there is a great change in the weather, your primrose satin dress, that you had new for the clown's benefit, will hardly do for Alexandra Park Races on Saturday. Still, as you "look so well"

in it, you might wear it driving down, and swap it for something more durable at the last decent pub on the road. Try the Alexandra Park Tavern ; there is a quiet private bar down the tradesman's entrance, and Gilbert, the cabman, being a married man, might be trusted to hook or button anything for you. You need not be afraid to meet your friend's friend, the owner of Gluefoot, of whom you speak, as the expression, "the owner has nothing on," does not refer to his clothing.

Rosie, who is up from the old vicarage for a few days, has just dropped in to ask me to take her to look at the *hautes nouveautés*, some of which I may describe to you in my next letter.—Till **then**, dearest, your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

JUIN

THE SPROUTS, BELLAGGIO.

SWEET LITTLE MADGE,

The month of roses finds me installed in new diggings; I have flown down into Surrey, utterly worn out with the countless vexations that beset one who lives in a residential flat. When I reflect upon what I went through during the last quarter of my tenancy, I recall dear Yvette Gilbert's remarks, which were included in the preface she wrote to a certain merry book which was "*le tout Paris de tout Paris*" in its Frenchiness, and came out a few years ago.

" 'My dear,' one of my comrades said to me one day, 'I often ask myself, for what do they take us? I had been looking for an apartment in a respectable house, well kept, orderly—in fact, what I want. At last I found it; I wanted to rent it, but here I ran against a snag. When the *concierge* learned that I was an actress he did

not want to rent to me. Finally, after hesitating a long time, and parleying for days, the owner deigned to accept me as a tenant for the temple, saying: "I can count on you, can I not, to live *bourgeoisement*?"

"I moved in, but had hardly settled when the life of the house became infernal. My neighbour below led the life of a dog until three o'clock in the morning; the lady above me tried to get my lover from me, and the widow opposite me received so much company, that there was a veritable cab standing in front of the door day and night. It became scandalous. I gave up the apartment."

And London landladies are every bit as fussy as the absurd *concierge* of Yvette's little friend. I well remember how dear Lena Frith trudged about St John's Wood the whole of one day, looking over a suite here and an upper part there, until finally she thought she had hit on just the place to suit her—quiet, bright, clean, and nicely furnished. It was then that the sedate old landlady who had shown her over the rooms remarked, somewhat severely: "I—er—might mention—er—that I never let rooms to ladies who are alone." "Oh, you needn't worry on *that* score," answered Lena artlessly, "I am hardly ever alone,

auntie!" and, would you believe it, the frumpish old thing caught Lena by the back of the neck and the dress-improver, and ran her out into the street, as though she had been a verminous person or a fever case!

I must tell you that Charlie and I have taken the delightful semi-detached bungalow between Horley and Crawley that I told you about in my last; indeed we have been living in it for the past fortnight. I think it exquisitely rural. We are over a mile from a house of any sort, and nearly two from a tavern. Charlie has hit upon such a pretty name for it, "Dryazell." Is it not charmingly sylvan? As far as I can judge, our next door neighbours are particularly quiet people, but it may be that they are only keeping so (as the walls are very, very thin) in order to overhear what we say.

How fortunate you are in keeping your servants, dear. I must tell you that the last girl we had from the registry office has given us no end of trouble. It being her "day out" last Monday, she went to the Crystal Palace, and, whilst there, ate or drank something that disagreed with her. In the middle of the night she was doubled up with pain, and groaned in a most awful way,

Poor Charlie scoured the surrounding country for miles for a doctor, but could only find a veterinary surgeon, who, as nearly as I could catch, said the foolish girl had "overloaded her gastric reticule." He mixed a few ounces of linseed oil, rum, and a fluid resembling shellac varnish, after swallowing which Jane Ann fell into a deep sleep, and the veterinary took his departure. His manner was, I thought, very odd, and as he went away he said, either from forgetfulness or force of habit, that for a few days we were to "bruise her oats and keep her stall dry."

I was awfully concerned for the poor thing, and hunted high and low for a most useful book I have, called "What to Do while Waiting for the Doctor," and when at last I found it, I was all the more agitated, because the only remedy suggested in cases where the symptoms corresponded to Jane Ann's was, "Induce the sufferer to make his (or her) will."

Up to the present I have not found country life nearly so dull as I thought it would be, and it is quite a mistake to suppose that only town people (and, of course, the criminal classes) are versed in the art of making things hum. For instance, there is a sweet young girl, living in a *maisonette* only just over the hill, who went to the last race-

meeting at Gatwick, fell in love, married, settled down, broke up housekeeping, lost her husband, and resumed her maiden name, all within the last month. Her husband, during the same time, "took the knock" in the Ring, met and married the girl, gave a bill-of-sale on her furniture, was hammered on the Stock Exchange, altered his name twice, and then disappeared mysteriously, unseen by anybody—like the beautiful maiden in the play, whose father, coming to look for her on the following morning, exclaims: "Alas! alas her little bed has not been slept in, her chamber is empty!"

I saw Bertie Hobson the other day at the railway station at Three Bridges. Do you know, I never gaze upon his bronzed and sunburnt visage without thinking of that little *contretemps* at Mrs de Curzon Brown's dinner table. I think you were there, and consequently may remember how she was gushing about his having been hand to hand with those blood-thirsty Egyptians, fighting gallantly for his country, etc.; and then she wound up with: "And that terrible but honourable scar, right across your cheek, Captain Hobson, where did you get that—at Kassassin or Tel-el-Kebir?" "Oh lor! neither," he blurted out, forgetting himself in his blunt, frank, fashion,

“That was a girl I was standing a drink to at Victoria Station. I put down a sovereign, and she said it had gone down behind the bottles, but I knew devilish well it hadn’t, and I told her so, and then she ups with the decanter——” But as by this time even the servants were giggling, Mrs de Curzon Brown dropped a plate and smashed it, purposely decimating her best service to save the dignity of the situation.

Although we did not come down here with the idea of entertaining company, we have had an old Oxford friend of Charlie’s staying with us. We call him “The Reverend Peter.” He really is one of Nature’s gentlemen, though he is as free from money as a frog is from feathers, and has no home ties. If he has any relatives, they do not correspond with him; he is not the brand of hairpin they require. He was unfortunate enough to get plucked at the University, and now, instead of piloting souls to the upper blue himself, he is reduced to frogging out sermons at half-a-guinea a pair for old comrades who were more fortunate. Not that he ever indulges in vain regrets about it, for, as he says, he plays such a dashed bad game at baccarat that he never could have held his own against the

churchwardens in the vestry after the taking-up of the offertory.

All his after-dinner stories are permeated by a certain moral tone which is distinctly refreshing, as, for instance, the adventure of a clerical brother of his, who took some rooms in Southampton Street, Strand, which had only just been vacated by a music-hall and variety agent. In the bustle and confusion of moving out this person seems to have forgotten to write to the telephone company to come and take their instrument down. So when, only two days later, the Reverend Septimus Judd, who had taken the flat principally on account of its handy proximity to Exeter Hall, moved in, the vulcanite receiver still hung listlessly by its cord, and the little mahogany desk, though thick with dust, was still affixed to the wall.

It happened on the new tenant's first evening as he stood unpacking bundles of good and moral books, and arranging them on the newly-erected shelves, that the telephone bell rang violently. The suddenness and loudness of the ringing caused him to start for an instant from his task; the next he was smiling good-naturedly at the train of queer thoughts it had awakened. He walked over to the machine, took down the bell,

applied it to his ear, and called into the glass receiver:

"Hello! Who are you?"

"Clocker, 'Ackney Varieties! Why ain't yer sent on the contrac's for the Human Grass-opper?"

A large, beaming, plethoric smile of gratification suffused the honest countenance of the Reverend Septimus. Oft as he had longed to reach the outside degenerates of the music-halls, he had never had such a chance as this; clearly it was Providence that had placed this telephone in his hands! It was immensely rich, but nothing was too rich for the blood of Septimus, and he answered, with something akin to a chuckle:

"'Because,' as sayeth Ecclesiastes, 'the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.'"

There was an unusually long wait before the reply came through:

"Who *are* you?"

"Reverend Septimus Judd, Exeter Hall, next Sunday afternoon; come round, all are wel——"

A bang and a sort of ringing told the Reverend Septimus that he was no longer "connected,"

wherefore he returned to the arranging of his books, smiling almost audibly. In another little while there was a second tintinnabulary agitation, and again the good man who believed in seizing opportunities went over to the machine.

"Hello?"

"Hello. You there?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Sisters Hawkitt. What's our time?"

The broadest smile of the evening meandered over the features of Mr Judd, as he replied in a serious tone:

"*'Now is the accepted time.'*"

Full of asperity came the answer:

"*Now?* What's eatin' yer? Why, they ain't played the overtoor yet."

"The overture is *always* playing," answered the good man with enthusiasm. "'He sayeth among the trumpets, Ha, ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.'"

A considerable pause followed this statement. The Reverend Septimus almost fancied that the charming sisters had gone, but eventually one replied, in a weary tone:

"We'll go on as soon as we're dressed, anyhow, and call on you to-morrow. Meantime, get

a jag that fits you; the one you're wearing's too big!"

He tried to ring them up again to give them a verbal invite to his Women's Wednesday Evenings, but failed to make the connection.

Next morning the Reverend Septimus had several callers, and the last of all was the most unwelcome, for it was an operator from the Universal Telephone Syndicate, and his taking the machine away seriously hampered the good work so recently started. For who knows, as the Reverend Septimus remarked, but *some* of the good seed sown by the wayside might have sprung up?

What do you think Priscilla Poynter is going to do? Guess! Get married? No; men are fools, but they draw the line somewhere. Go on the stage? My dear, don't you remember the spindleshanks we used to see when bathing at Trouville? Padding will do a lot, but it won't do everything. Well, not to keep you any longer in suspense, she has turned religious, and is going to become a nurse and attend to the dirty poor in the slums. Nobody can dissuade her from it. Her Aunt Meredith pointed out that she would be taking all sorts of horrible diseases home to her family, and she replied

that was exactly what she wanted to do. Then her Uncle Robbins urged that the class of people she would be called upon to nurse would, under the surgeon's saw and lancet, or in great bodily pain, use language which it would be totally impossible for her to hear. She, however, answered that, having stood her brother Lionel's language for twenty years, nothing that the most drunken coalheaver, having his leg cut off, could say would in anyway astonish her. And here I think she was right. Her still most devoted admirer—and how faithful he is!—Percy Whiffitt, in order to be nursed by her, is sowing the seeds for a luxuriant harvest of *delirium tremens*. Is it not touching? Leander got to his Hero by swimming through the salt sea, but I think he is totally eclipsed by Percy swimming to his Priscilla through an ocean of music-hall brandy!

I could have wished that you had not asked me how Millie likes married life. Marrying a middle-aged man is often like biting into a public-house pork pie—you do not know what you have got till it is too late to throw it up; and everybody but Millie herself could see beforehand that she and the major were not suited to one another. It is an old saying with the

Portuguese that no man can be a good husband who does not eat a good breakfast (and, as a matter of fact, the Major is always fearfully ill from five minutes until two hours after waking); but Millie must have thought him very, very simple when she expected him to believe that the mark on her shoulder was where she had been bitten by a llama at the Zoo. All of which goes to prove that Millie's old dodge of attracting the notice of seemingly wealthy men by enquiring if she has to change at Clapham Junction for Billericay does not answer when applied to a permanency. By latest accounts they have made it up together for the—goodness knows how many-th time, Millie having signed a paper that she will never see D—— again. She would have faced the Divorce Court undaunted, she told me, had the “Co-” been all one colour, which, with his inflamed nose, yellow skin, and invariable black eye, D—— seldom is.

I daresay you have noticed, Madge, that no man ever can remember what he did a year ago on a certain day, although, if he appeals to his women-folks, they can invariably tell him. It was after reminding Charlie of one or two merry little incidents of *last* Derby Day that I suggested he should take me to Epsom next Wednesday.

He has, to use his own words, "got a book-maker on the bow"; so, if we can get a dog-cart "on the nod," and a luncheon-basket "on the curtesy," we shall certainly see the Derby—that is, if the man Hawke and the Social Gimlet Society do not get it interdicted.

Have you changed your underclothes yet? The question might sound strange if asked "in Society," as dear Lady Colin was wont to say in the ever-memorable suit, but it is all right between girl cousins. Dame Fashion's latest decree—that our silk underskirts should be lined with nun's veiling—is simply hateful. They absolutely refuse to rustle. On the other hand, there are compensations. It is no longer necessary for ladies to be in full dress when called down by the night constable at three in the morning to deny all knowledge of the maid-servant, who has been found asleep in the beer-cellar in the area, with a trooper of the Royal Horse Guards.

In reply to your question, I should not boil the sky-blue *reseda* which you say you spilt the black draught over; so few of these fabrics are dyed fast colours nowadays. Can't you put a *plastron* of some bright material, or plush, over it, so that even if it did not do for the wedding

you think of going to, it would surely come in later on for the Promenade Concerts?

Oh, I knew I had another item of news for you, dear! Marjorie Markwell has been staying with us, though she has suffered much this spring from a suppressed cold and shock to the nervous system. I think I told you she was standing over a grating, looking into a shop window in Oxford Street, whilst a wretched, mischievous errand boy was monkeying with a garden-hose in the area below. Boys will be boys, I know; but a sudden jet of ice-cold water is fearfully and dangerously startling, and Marjorie's nerves were never really strong.

Fifine has just entered to tell me that tea is ready, so, dear, with the old wish "everything you want, and just when you want it," I am, your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

JUILLET

THE LADY AUTHORS' CLUB
Tuesday.

MY POOR LITTLE MADGE!

Beyond remarking, dear, that once again you seem to have been putting up the wrong matrimonial badger, I do not see what I can say in answer to your very doleful letter of this morning, save that you have my very fullest sympathy. At the same time, I cannot help thinking that it must have been due to some very great indiscretion of your own that the young gentleman made the discovery that you wore an artificial limb. However, buck up! Men are so fond of agreeable places to loaf—(and you tell me that your new flat is a perfect little paradise. By the way, Madge, you are not the experienced housekeeper I thought you. The trouble in your kitchen is that you have mice—mice of opposite sexes—there)—that good-natured, easy-going men of thirteen stone and upwards soon find themselves

engaged. Keep a good heart, little **one**, your silk stockings are as good as new, and the Big Wheel at Earl's Court will not stop running till October. It is your present harassed state of mind, combined with the restricted ventilation of your rooms, I think, that depresses you. Whenever this dejection comes on, relief may be had by letting the sink tap run for fifteen minutes, and then pouring down about a pint of carbolic fluid or a teacupful of permanganate of potash.

And now for a little adventure of my own. I daresay you remember how Mr Pickwick discovered the manuscript of "The True Legend of Prince Bladud," tucked away in an inkstand drawer in his apartment at Mrs Craddock's, in the Royal Crescent, at Bath; well, *I*, too, have discovered an old manuscript. I came across it in the secret drawer of a small second-hand writing-table, which Charlie picked up for a mere song at an auction-room the other day. It is evidently the *bonâ fide* and voluntary confession of one John Smith, and I give it word for word:—

"MONDAY, Nov. 18, 1895.

"Seated calmly and soberly by my own fire-

side—my wife being gone with her sister to the pit stalls of the Grand, late Philharmonic, the children being in bed, and our only maid-servant (probably) in the gallery at Sam Collins' Music-Hall, with the morning postman's arm about her neck—I, John Newminster Smith, of 367A, Liberia Road, Highbury Barn, in the county of Middlesex, do solemnly and sincerely declare that :

“ When first I heard on Friday afternoon that Laodamia had won, I thought I should go fairly off my burner for very joy !

“ I am the only child living of poor but honest parents. My lamented mother was the daughter of a Southsea pork-butcher ; my still surviving father was a pilot until the night that he blew the boat's whistle to pass a star, which he took to be a steam-boat signal, an unfortunate affair, which cost him his certificate. My mother was a good, long-suffering soul, and often and often, when my male parent, who was a free and frequent libator, came home tanked up, she would beg of me, as we took it in turns to sit by father until his visions subsided, to choose some more genteel occupation. This I subsequently did by entering the counting-house of Messrs Van Hler and Glew, the eminent cabinet-makers of Curtain

Road, E.C., in whose employ I am—(by the unconscious grace of old Harry Hall and the luck of Laodamia)—to this day.

“(Pardon me one moment. Let me mix myself another whisky and turn the key in the door. That’s it.)

“For years I have been ringing the petty cash-book on Messrs V. H. & G.

“It began only in a small way, but *Facilis descensus Averni!* which in classic English means, that a willing attendant, who is forbidden to accept gratuities on pain of instant dismissal, is kept constantly on the premises to grease the trousers’-seats of gentlemen desirous of patronising the down chutes.

“I find, upon searching my conscience, that it is only after a man has kept up with the procession by falsifying the paying-in book to the tune of seventy or eighty sovereigns, that the great truth that by sin death came into the world strikes him as an old ‘market horse,’ but still in the handicap.

“But it is then too late for him to pull up. He has every desire to do so, principally in order to prevent his personal sorrows becoming enjoyment for the coarse, brutal, Sunday afternoon readers of *Lloyd’s* or *Reynolds’s*, but the

game has started, as it were, and, having looked at his hand, he sees no way out of it save by drawing more cards. His children need their winter outfits, and his wife has set her mind upon a furred velvet mantle that shall fill the hearts of the neighbours with bitterness. Another mantle and a sapphire bangle are wanted, too, in another quarter, and the presence of a flock of seagulls at Blackfriars only serves to remind him that his coal-cellar wants fortifying.

"I did not give my mind, as some would have done, to the 'Special' that populates the grave, but Barry Pain afforded me some solace. 'I don't care about intense virtue in real life,' says Barry, taking a trick, 'because there it is always accompanied by bad temper—and bad temper is unpardonable. The man who is mildly and persistently disagreeable all his life is a much worse enemy to society than a man who is, as a rule, cheerful and unselfish, but commits a murder in a momentary lapse.'

"On Friday, the 8th, whilst Van Hier was at the Surrey Commercial Docks looking over a parcel of mahogany, and Glew was rubbing it into an unfortunate tradesman before Mr Registrar Giffard, I quietly totted up my defaultings to the firm.

"One hundred and eighty-seven pounds sixteen and tenpence half-penny !

"To raise that sum by any honest means and put it back was out of the question. *Per contra* : Who would pay my family's board and washing bill while I sate in a high-backed pew only two from the warder and repented ?

"I had three gins and angosturas, and filched another tenner. Ten pounds and twopence half-penny, to be correct, for the postage to Holland is equivalent to twenty-five centimes.

"I'd always fancied the mare—thought she'd have won in a trot at Kempton—so, I am told, did Harry Hall ; but perhaps not. Anyway, Messrs Topps, Carraway, & Bottom returned me £250 to £10.

• • • • •
"My wife's latchkey in the street door. Down, Ponto, down ! It's only the missis. Good dog, good dog !

"That heavenly win has made me another man. My wife has ordered her mantle, my children dream of forthcoming Christmas productions as they slumber between the heaviest Witneys that Heal's could supply, and—after to-morrow night—I shall bestow no more sapphire bangles in any quarter.

"I felt so good on Sunday that I went to church twice, and in the evening read three chapters of the Second Book of Proverbs to a reformed cab-driver from Queen's Head Mews. *He*, too, used to bet in the old days; indeed, we both agreed that, if it wasn't for the sin of having another accursed bet, there's seldom been seen such a pinch on paper as Count Sch——

"But here is my wife!

"(Signed) JOHN NEWMINSTER SMITH."

There, dear, what do you think of my "find"?

I have always held, dear Madge, that there is a great deal more fascination about somebody else's life's partner than about one's own. I suppose it is because limited possession accords better with the frailties of poor humanity. Anyway, it is on this circumstance in human nature that half the modern plays and all the successful six-shilling novels of the present day are based. You have heard me speak of pretty little Mrs Terence Wortonhunt, whose shockingly fast husband ran away with Letty Bunn from the Gaiety? Well, when she definitely adopted the theatrical profession, as she did six months ago, she decided to whack up a sort of contra-account to her erring husband, so she first made violent

love to, and then publicly horse-whipped her acting manager—although she told her dearest friends that she only did it for the “splendid advertising.” It caused her box-office receipts to go up by big jumps, anyhow, and her fickle husband, coming to the conclusion about the same time that absolute possession of the Bunn was slowly but surely blunting his appetite for pastry, wrote a most penitent letter home, in which he asked on what terms he could come back. Hilda replied to him just three weeks ago. “If you care to combine the *rôle* of the foully-wronged husband with that of man-in-front,” she wrote, “I am prepared to offer you four pounds a week, a new dress suit, Abyssinian gold watch-chain, and three imitation diamond shirt studs; but you are not required in any other capacity. Address your reply to Mr H. de Bellevère, No. 1 *Bar of Soap* Company, *en route* (see *Era* for address).”

He has come back, and the little scheme seems to be working fairly well, but she is evidently much afraid of him. He is, of course, still her lawful lord and master, and this fact leads her to invest all her earnings in diamond ornaments. “If I don’t either carry my salary stuck into my body,” she said, as she showed me a pair of bewildering new eardrops, “or swallow the

cheques as I receive them, he may take it into his head to go off again with something in the chorus, or one of the programme hussies!"

Philosophic women with flighty husbands—women who take in the anonymous babies left at their partners' front-door, and charitably call them *step*-children—belong, unfortunately, to all ages, but very few have accepted the inevitable with a cheerier grace than dear Lady D——, certainly the most delightful hostess in Belgravia.

"Do you know, I think your husband is such a fascinating man," said a budding beauty to her ladyship, with every desire to be complimentary.

"Hullo—*you, too?*" was her ladyship's reply, as her lips formed a pitying smile.

What is coming over our young men of the middle class—the sort that turn counter-jumpers in their giddy youth? I really do think, dear, that a free distribution of Doctor Boutall's Buck-Up Drops amongst them would be a beneficial move for the charitable to undertake. I was coming through the Burlington this afternoon, wearing a smart starched shirt and collar, with a tailor-made skirt and steel belt, and I chanced to see such a pretty new necktie in a shop window. It was made to tie in a sailor's knot, and I went in and purchased it. "I want you to put it on

for me, please," I said to one of the grinning assistants ; " boys always tie knots so much better than girls." With the three other young fellows watching him, he proceeded to adjust the tie, tittering like a typhoid idiot, till I felt half inclined to fetch him a swipe across the mouth with the volume I was carrying—such an up-to-date, startling romance, dear, called " The Sleeping Signalman, or, You'll all be Angels By and By ; " you must get it. Well, when the thing was tied, and after I had ducked my tuppenny to allow him to slip the neckband under my rear stud, the ends seemed a bit long, and he asked : " Er—a—how do you fasten these, miss ? " " Tuck them inside," said I, when he went as crimson as a tray-ripened early Bottombarley tomato, and stuttered : " B—b—b—but I'm not married ! " Idiot ! Now *some* women positively court ridicule of this kind by their thoughtless procedure, but I do not. I refer, for instance, to dear Laura, who so seldom gets a tenner from her hubby, that whenever she does so she treasures it—not exactly next her heart—but next the garment that is next her heart. Being the happy possessor of a " bit of paper " the other day, she carried off her three little nieces to Buszard's, where the dear children proceeded to freeze the

mucous membranes and bung up the follicles of their *svelte* little stomachs with lemon ices and childish promptitude. It was only when they had jointly incurred a liability of seven-and-sixpence that dear Laura, blushing furiously, observed in an audible whisper to the young man behind the counter: "Will you kindly turn your head the other way whilst I — ~~er~~ — unfasten my corsets?"

With a great deal of regret have I read the kindly letter of a correspondent who signs herself "Full to Overflowing," a metaphorical reference, I take it, to her cup of sorrow, or her husband — or both. She wrote to me a fortnight back for a face-wash, and, misreading her letter, by some sad mischance I sent her a recipe for curing hams. Although the skin is still extremely painful, she says it is a mere fleabite to the great sorrow that is gnawing at her heart. She was taken by her husband the other day on a shopping expedition to the Stores, where he is very well known, but she is not, and she distinctly overheard the fool of a shopman, after receiving a more than ordinarily extravagant order for soups, *glacés* and sweetmeats, ask her lawful partner the terrible but significant question:

"And where are *these* to be sent to, sir—

Gunnersbury, or—er (with a meaning wink)—Claverton Street?"

I hardly know what to advise her to do, unless it is to endeavour to balance the unhappy business by having a little fun on her own account.

Sympathising with you in your own little affair,
dear,—Yours always.

MAUDE.

A O U ' I ' .

OFF COWES, 1 W

SWEET MADGE,

If ever you should pine for an entirely novel and delightful experience, inveigle some Johnnie into taking a sailing yacht for you, and then go cruising about the South Coast and the Solent in it. It is quite the most exquisite thing I can think of—that is, when once you have got your sea legs and learned to re-swallow. Do you remember dear Arthur Roberts, with a very white face, coming up the companion-way of the *Saucy Puss* when she was caught in the gale? Holding tightly to the brass hand-rail on either side of him, he swayed backwards and forwards, and then remarked, in gulps :

“They tell me—apples 're a goo' thing for it. I could—*do with an orchard!*”

Dear Algy Ronalds, whose guests we are here, lives entirely aboard his yacht, so as to be permanently beyond the reach of his importunate

creditors, and oh! the life is so deliciously primitive! Whatever we want, from the shops ashore has to be fetched in the dinghy by a brick-red sailor, who is also the ship's carpenter, chamber-maid, sail-mender, and general utility man. Last night he ~~was in~~ ^{was in} the captain's hair, and a more perfect piece of weather-boarding I have never seen. He is a typical British tar, and, though I heard Algy say that he regularly spends all his wages on the women he meets in the taverns in Portsmouth, he always goes home to his lawful Poll, who lives in some northern port—Stornoway, I think—in the winter. Blood, after all, is thicker than alcohol—or, perhaps, I should say *some* alcohol, since Charlie, who went in the boat with the mariner last evening, ostensibly to replenish the ship's larder with onions, is said to be still sleeping peacefully on the Hampshire foreshore, somewhere below Netley.

Altogether we are a very cheery party, which includes several nice men and a certain Dolly Dreifoogie, who, Algy says, is a very good and virtuous girl—though he did not tell me how he discovered the fact—and if only the winds would blow in the directions we desire to travel, we should have really nothing left to wish for.

Which reminds me that yesterday, in a futile attempt to "make" Cherbourg, we had to turn back when half-way across the Channel and run into Brighton. It was all the more provoking, because Brighton in August is simply *impossible*. A "parade" in aid of the local dispensaries was taking place, and it chiefly consisted of two triumphal cars, illustrative, I presume, of the daily increasing demand for drugs. The first represented a brigand's cave, and showed three sickly-looking brigands pretending to be playing at cards, while their beautiful female captive stood in a corner unembraced by anything save a fixed clothes-prop, to which she was bound by chains and thongs. Probably it was meant to show that beautiful girls had nothing to fear from brigands who did not possess outdoor letters for the Brighton dispensaries, since they were far too debilitated to go in for love-making even when they had the chance, which was while their lovely captives were awaiting the receipt of a remittance from their, possibly, agonised friends.

The other *tableau* represented a little girl in bed, attended by her mother, her father, and her little brother, and they were supposed to have just promised her that, if she took her medicine

like a good child, she should get a large, hideous doll, which the man danced up and down idiotically. This group was called "The Bribe," and it must have filled judicious parents with a poignant grief. For, nowadays, a well-regulated child no sooner knows enough to grow hair than it is on terms of personal familiarity with its Keppler and its Parrish, lies on its right side when sleeping, breathes through its nostrils, and never sits down to meals without inflating its little lungs three times; and only hopelessly illiterate and imbecile parents, more fit to raise rabbits or silkworms than children, would dream of presenting a child with a "bribe." How much more nicely and appropriately the title of the *tableau* could have been realised by—say, an old man of thirty, who has been metaphorically dancing on the steps of the Keeley Institute since he came of age, and who has now to undergo a possibly fatal operation, giving the trained nurse of his choice—Sister Flossie—a snappy little supper in a private room at dear old Kettner's?

Henrietta Pondwithers once went in for a probationary course as a trained nurse, don't you remember?

It was during her novitiate that she abruptly

broke off her engagement with that entertaining young *litterateur*, of whom she once thought so very, very much, until she one day picked up and secretly perused a letter, which he accidentally dropped from his pocket. Not that it incriminated him with any woman or anything of that sort, but it ran :

“ R

Spts. Ammon. Arom., ʒj.

Spts. Æther. Chlor., m̄xv.

Tinct. Capsici., m̄x.

Syrupi Aurantii, ʒij.

Acid. Hydrocyanic. dil. (B.P.), mij (2).

Aquæ Flor. Aurantii, ʒss.

Aquæ ad ʒij. M. ft. haust.”

And Henrietta said she really didn't feel experienced enough to tackle such an advanced case of “James-marmalades” as his was. A few days later, rendered desperate by Hetty's refusal and whatever it was that he had taken to drown his sorrow, he mated with a person—very rich, it was said, but quite old enough to be his mother—with whom he quarrelled on his wedding night. It seems that, overawed in his fuddled condition by her veteran appearance, he no sooner got his nighty's on than he went down on his knees at her feet, and, closing his eyes and

putting his hands together, as he used to in his nursery days, he inadvertently began with—

“Now I lay me down to sleep!”

It may have been thoughtlessness, or he may have considered it facetious, but the dear old soul was inexpressibly shocked, and the bright young *littérateur* is once again fighting for the smaller plums of Fleet Street, as the result of his idiotic conduct. It has been said that a pair of large blue eyes, a tiny waist, a tapering ankle in a brown silk stocking, and a tailor-made frock will often make a man feel as if there was only a thin sheet of tissue paper between Heaven and himself, but it is the elderly female with the slight iron-grey moustache and six figures in her bank balance who can make the intelligent young man, possessed of only ordinary tact, supremely comfortable for the “rest of his natch,” as Charlie says.

I heard a little story, by the way, of a *previous* occasion on which this excellent wife-in-name-only—then known as Miss Priscilla Molloy-Minns—received a severe shock to her maidenly sensibilities; it is a story of blighted hopes and an india-rubber plant. The plant was only of the common order, but its stem was five feet high,

and each of its two-and-twenty leaves stood out as straight as a royal flush in poker.

And when the sun shone of a morning on the back gardens—some of them very pretty and well-kept back gardens—of Tranquilla Terrace, N.W., a neat maid-servant carried this plant in its majolica pot out on to the grass plot in the rear of the villa, in which it had reared its head from mere babyhood—the plant, not the grass plot—that it might take the sun and air.

It was a very ordinary action for the maid-servant to be guilty of—so ordinary indeed that I should feel ashamed of mentioning it so prominently but for the fact that, thus exposed to view, the majestic plant attracted the attention and excited unchristian envy in the breast of an ordinarily dispassionate female fellow atom, no less a person, dear, than the dear old soul who, later in life, fell in love with the bibulous young *littérateur*. Miss Minns, who then lived in a pretty villa at the other end of the terrace, saw that india-rubber plant from a back window, and sighed.

She sighed because she herself had spent many weary years in futile endeavours to bring the india-rubber plant to perfection. She had taken them from the nest, as it were, and failed to rear

them. She had nursed the young offshoot from the parent stem or tap-root, had sponged and fondled it, pruned and trained it, and, when she saw it withering, had wept over it—all to no purpose. Perhaps the last unusual method of irrigation disagreed with it; anyway, her plants never lived. Little wonder, then, that discouragement and covetousness filled her virgin bosom as she gazed out of her back windows. To whom did the plant belong? Who in that lengthy row of "eligible desirables" carried the secret of rubber-plant rearing in his or her hand?

Counting the garden walls as best she could, she at length arrived at the conclusion that the admirable evergreen belonged to "Number Twenty," and being subsequently interrogated upon the matter, the dealer in horseflesh, who supplies the felines of that district with their daily lunch (and who has just assured his patrons and the public generally by circular that, anxious to merit a continuation of their favours, he has already made His Grace the Duke of Westminster a tempting offer for Batt), added a link to the chain of evidence in the information that "Number Twenty was a party by the name o' 'Arris, an' somethink to do with sausages."

Miss Priscilla Molloy-Minns resolved to be bold. She would lay maidenly reserve on one side and hew to the line. Summoning Dutch courage to her aid by swallowing a whole liqueur glass of Mother Somebody's Stomach Bitters, she wrote :—

"SIR,—Bold and unconventional as it may seem for a perfect stranger thus to address you, I have decided to take the liberty, inasmuch as I am sure you can assist me.

"Tell me—I implore you as a gentleman—(a) Ought I to prune my india-rubber plant thus late in the season? (b) how far down the stem? (c) what will be the result?

"Thanking you in anticipation.

"PRISCILLA MOLLOY-MINNS."

When "the party at Number Twenty" got that note he was sorter puzzled, so to speak—on the horn of a dilemma. He knew no more of Miss Molloy-Minns than did the Man in the Iron Mask, nor was he much better posted on india-rubber plants, but he was a man of gallantry, and one who fostered and encouraged both advanced action and thought in others, and certainly he was not to blame if the elderly but well-regulated spinster had counted the garden walls—I won't say carelessly, but anyway—inaccurately. So, after laughing within himself until he had to

take off his spectacles no less than five times to wipe them, he replied :—

“DEAR MISS OR MADAM,—Don't mention it. It is no liberty whatever—real or imaginary. I think (a) that it might have been pruned sooner, but it's never too late to mend ; (b) that if you don't overdo it, (c) you may reasonably expect a crop of india-rubber balls sufficient to set you up in a village toy-shop in due season.—Yours truly, W. HARRIS.”

It was after this that Miss Minns gave up plant culture in favour of making flannel underwear for—if one may judge by the shape of the articles—the deformed poor of her parish.

Speaking of the matrimonial vagaries of the elderly, who in the wide world should we encounter coming down the steps of the Métropole but old Mr Wrigley, who recently celebrated his seventy-third birthday by running away with a widow. She is well on the wrong side of sixty, too, and I hear that their respective grandchildren, thinking it unwise to be too obdurate, as there is money on both sides of the house, have been literally falling over one another to wire to the elderly couple to say that, if they will return to their sorrowing grandchildren, “all will be forgiven.”

I had quite a long letter yesterday from dear Laura, who begins by saying : “We are moving

our chattels and our movables again—for the seventeenth time in twelve years. Is not it jolly?” Personally, I do not wax wildly hilarious over stick-shifting. However, I suspect that the only credit they have left is with the household removals people, and they feel bound to avail themselves of it. They lead a nomadic life, and appear to sleep as soundly in a pantechicon van as they do anywhere. She continues: “Our new landlord said he’d ‘do up the drawing-rooms to suit us,’ so I am having them redecorated something similar to the dining-room at the Carlos at one end, and Alfred de Rothschild’s Wouvermann Gallery at the other, with a painted ceiling of water-nymphs and cupids playing at ‘Widdy-Widdy-Way!’ in the ornamental waters at Kensington Gardens. This will please the children, who have spent a good deal of time round the bathing-machines since we have been at Folkestone.”

I fear poor Laura has a deal to put up with in Arthur. She told me not long ago, with tears in her eyes, how a cabman, who drove them home to their last new house, appeared to know Arthur quite well, and, on pulling up at the door, asked him in a stage-whisper, which might have been faintly audible at a mile and a

half, "Shall I wait?" This kind of thing must be very disheartening—but then I fear that remark would apply to nearly everything that he does. He took her to Norway quite recently, only to find out when he got there that a law existed which prohibited any person from spending more than twopence-halfpenny for liquor at one visit to a public-house. As dear Laura says, "This kept us running the whole time, until at last I dropped from sheer exhaustion."

The remainder of her letter partakes rather of the nature of a curtain lecture, which I am afraid I deserve. I fear that I sent her a wrong recipe the other day. She asked me for a sponge trifle *à la* Arthur Roberts; but after following my directions, the dish turned out a dentist's rubber dam, such as is held in the mouth while the imperfections in one's "upper plate" are removed by the lathe. She is the more annoyed, too, because the deaconess of a place of worship hard by called upon her on the following day, to say that if in future she would tell them whenever she intended cooking, special services should be held in the chapel till she was through with it. I can only regret my carelessness, which I sincerely do.

Fanny Frear has, curiously enough, asked me

the very same question as yourself—what to wear at the first dance of the season at the Blue Mountains' Supper Club. Why not go as Grace Darling, one of you? It is a pretty and an inexpensive costume, consisting of a short canvas skirt, red flannel shirt, no corsets, boots to the hips, and a six-three-farthing sou'-wester of some bright shade. As attractive accessories you may introduce a few fathoms of cable, a life-buoy, or a white china basin. But, to carry the thing through successfully, play light with the "sherbet" at supper, and keep your fore and aft canvas well storm-reefed.

My brick-red, nautical errand boy has just presented himself to say he's going ashore to the post-office, so, dearest, I conclude as ever.---

Your affectionate cousin,

MAUDE.

SEPTEMBRE

GRAND HOTEL, PARIS.

DEAR LITTLE MADGE,—

As you will see by the lithographed heading to my notepaper, I am writing this from the dear, delightful Grand in Paris, and Paris is literally packed. I am on the seventeenth floor here, and whatever I should do if the place caught fire I really do not know. In case of an outbreak in the middle of the night, however. I make it a rule to keep a duck of a transparent *crêpe de chine* night-gown, and—er, things—tastily punctuated by heliotrope satin bows, on a chair at my bedside. One never knows *what* happens, clattering down those escapes!

I must tell you, dear, that, with his customary idiotic carelessness, Charlie had neglected to write from London to secure a suite of rooms here, so that we had to sit out the whole of the night of our arrival in the big room on the first

floor of the Café Americaine. I should positively have died if anybody had recognised me, but I saw some striking frocks, and I also noticed that, despite the fact that the nights are still beautifully fine, the drawing-in of the evenings has led to a general resumption of underclothing by all save the most impoverished. Blues appeared to be all the rage, the most noticeable toilettes being carried out in a shade that was something between the colours of a rook's egg and a bill-stamp. They are making up nothing else in the Rue de la Paix, and were good enough to let me have a peep at a frock they are "building" for Mdlle. Grille d'Egout, to be worn with amber *lingerie*, which is to turn the heads of all the men in Paris when, as the song says, she "gets 'em on." Scarlet hair is certainly coming into fashion. Worn in conjunction with a cornflower blue *toque*, the effect is very remarkable, and excites almost as much attention as a flirtation at the graveside. But the sweetest thing in millinery was, I think, the hat named after Madame de Pompadour, who, if I remember rightly, got herself much talked about in connection with Louis XV. Did not the gay and alcoholic relic of old Bourbonism persuade her to give Old Man

Pompadour the shake, and come and be a sort of "side-show" or matrimonial *annexe* at his court? Anyway, the hat I wish to tell you of was of emerald green straw, bordered with half-blown sunflowers, with half a bushel of bulrushes frappe'd over the crown, and a huge rosette of some soft clinging material about three points to starboard. It was to be worn abroad, and would go awfully well, I thought, with a costume of cocoa-nut oil and an apron of antelope tails. It is to be a "feather-and-fluff" winter season, I hear, though the shapeless box-coats of last year will, doubtless, hold their own with those who have abandoned the corset.

You will be quite as sorry to hear as I am to tell you that sweet little Florrie Oldaker is to be sent by her absurdly prim parents into a French convent. And yet Florrie is, as Cornille sings, "as seem-ple as a maide should be," and wouldn't give in on a point of modesty to anything that wears hair. But the other afternoon, on entering an omnibus in the Strand, Florrie sat down flat in the lap of an Episcopal Bishop, and so travelled for a little way, though, as she has since declared, her action was quite unpremeditated and entirely due to the jerk with which the omnibus restarted. Poor Florrie!

my heart simply stops beating when I think of her being immured in one of those Continental old-world fastnesses, of which, as a schoolgirl, I read in the *éditions de luxe* supplied post-paid and packed free from observation by the publishers of Holywell Street. How many beautiful and guileless maidens, I wonder, have been kept in these dungeons and compelled to sew on suspender buttons for the lay-brothers in the very darkest of dark cells? It is, indeed, tough for Florrie.

And, speaking of these weird romances, dear, leads me to utter a vehement protest against the shameful log-rolling indulged in by certain authors who cater for the readers of short stories in the present day. I will give you an instance. Just before leaving England I invested two shillings in a volume of tales which I found on a railway book-stall, and I composed myself on the blue cloth cushions to enjoy a couple of hours' desultory reading on the journey from town to the coast. How did I fare? Well, judge for yourself from the appended "sample" story, which is called—

"THE MYSTERY OF HAMPTON MAZE."

"IT happened many moons ago, before the

leaves of the June roses fell, but the gossips and other extemporaneous speakers of East Molesey still tell of it, among other things too humorous to mention.

"In a little white cottage, that in summer was nearly covered in sweet-scented clematis, lived Waterhouse Wilkins and his delightful young bride. Tall, manly, handsome, and the best-groomed man on the Surrey side, Waterhouse won every heart in Molesey, nor relinquished them between his going up to town by the 9.23 A.M. from Hampton Court, and returning by the 4.33 from Waterloo, or the 5.7 at latest. For he was a stockbroker, representing a red-hot firm—Messrs Gettup & Howell—in 'the house,' and you may take it from the author that no fresh green lawn grew under the feet of Waterhouse Wilkins.

"If Waterhouse was an ideal man, his young wife, Delicia, was a dream. She had those large, liquid brown eyes, that seem to chuckle with a mischievous smile, that you can almost hear out of their profound depths. The glow of perfect health tinted her skin, and even her hair had that rich sheen that nothing on earth but good digestion and real bears' grease can produce. It was with difficulty that the warm-blooded looker-

on could restrain himself from running his fingers through those rippling tresses, or chucking their owner under her shapely chin. Her presence was like a summer morning in a fairy garden, with a suggestion of violets embracing the leaves of an oak geranium that had been bowed by a passing breeze, and the sight of her *petite* figure crossing Hampton Bridge in the sunshine, caused the masculine heart to swell up like a pan of Spratt's biscuits that have been well wetted because the old dog's teeth are indifferent.

"Ere the first brown leaf of autumn fell, however, Waterhouse was called away. Something had gone wrong in South Africa. The head mining engineer, in all probability, had failed to divvy up amicably with the assayer who inspired the prospectus, for the wrong kind of geological output was being sent over, and Gettup and Howell wanted something better than chunks of long-time-dead megalosaurus to put before the board meeting.

"With many a tear, and a serious caution to avoid paving the way for hostile criticism, did Wilkins literally break away from his fair young wife. He even halted his fly at the minister's, which was in his way to the station, to ask the

man of prayers and parables to 'keep an eye on her' during his absence.

"And then he was gone.

"The good people of Molesey did not set eyes upon Delicia for many days, for she had shut herself up in the cottage. Her aged parents, who dropped down to pay her a surprise visit one day, were well-nigh eaten up by the mastiff on guard in the front garden, while they were trying to get to the electric button, but were rescued by Dick Dunn's coachman, and a potboy from Harry Tagg's. Delicia's blinds remained drawn, and Delicia was never seen.

"It may be neither a wise nor a humane thing for a husband to leave a sweet young wife alone in a Thames-side bungalow whilst he proceeds to South Africa to irrigate his company's stock, and Waterhouse may have been a bit verdant to go for to do it.

"Now it fell upon an afternoon about a month after the exodus of Waterhouse, that the reverend gentleman, hoeing in his front garden, saw Delicia pass quickly by and walk in the direction of the bridge. She looked pale and agitated, and the tiller in the vineyard and the small front plot hastily donned his coat, celluloid cuffs, and cloth hat, with the intention of following the evidently

erring wife. By the time he got on the road, however, she had disappeared over the bridge, and (the dignity of his cloth forbidding him to run) by the time he reached the bridge, Delicia was out of sight altogether. In an agitated way he interrogated an old beldame with a basket, but her only reply was a stern reprimand that sent the red blood to the very roots of his hair. 'Fie! fie!' cried she, 'ye should ha' done wi' courtin' when ye took that blessed livery! Shame on ye! Read o' what the dogs did to Jezebel, an'——'

"But, tingling with indignation, he was half way to the Mitre only to find that he had missed the quarry altogether.

"For many subsequent afternoons he posted sentinel, bright and ready as a new steel-trap, and, at last, his vigilance was rewarded.

"Pretty Mrs Waterhouse Wilkins shot by one dull, foggy afternoon, with a delightful new tailor-made frock and a good gait on. The sky-pilot was on the alert this time, and he had no trouble in discovering that Mrs Wilkins carried in her left hand a small brown-paper parcel, and she took the route across the bridge as before.

"On, on she went, the guide to the pellucid upper blue following at a distance. Over the

bridge she strode as usual, turned sharp to the right, and eventually entered—

“The Maze at Hampton Court!

“The parson knew his maze, too, and in and out of the shrubbery passages he assiduously dogged the footsteps of Delicia. What would be the sequel to this extraordinary pilgrimage? What were the contents of the mysterious brown-paper package?

“He traced her to the very centre of the maze, where she sat down for a moment and removed the string from the parcel.

“‘At all hazards I must learn what it contains,’ said the parsonic Paul Pry to himself, and, as if the fates had willed it, the fair grass widow left her seat and the bundle on it, and went to investigate one of the avenues.

“The parson flew forward and possessed himself of the packet on the seat.

“Was it the proof of a guilty woman's dishonour? Was it the damning evidence of her shame and duplicity?

“Not at all.

“It was a two-and-ninepenny bottle of New-riggle's Curative Compound, the Great Vegetable Remedy, which acts directly on the blood, and therefore is invaluable in all cases of anæmia,

rheumatism, scrofula, chronic erysipelas, also a splendid nerve and spinal tonic, recommended by the medical faculty in cases of paralysis, locomotor ataxy, St Vitus's dance, and nervous headache. Read what Mrs T. W. Bungit, whose life was a burden to her, whose legs and feet were swollen to twice their usual size, and whom seventeen doctors had given up, told the reporter of the *Wigan Headlight*——”

But there! I will not inflict any more of it upon you, though three-quarters of a column of shameless nonpareil advertising matter are unloaded on the unwary reader under the guise of entertaining fiction!

Coming across the Channel we witnessed quite a pretty little international quarrel aboard the boat. A man friend of Charlie's, called Tommy Sprat (whom you, doubtless, remember seeing at Ascot), chanced to occupy the next berth in the principal cabin to a fiery little Frenchman, a Capitaine Pipeau. Now the Captain came aboard the boat first, and having got out his basin, swallowed a few bars of *chocolat de voyage*, and pulled on a nightcap, rolled himself up, and went to sleep. When Sprat came down the companion-way some ten minutes later, the only thing he seemed to have on his mind (barring

his hat) was a desire to reach a berth and a basin simultaneously. His berth he'd secured beforehand, but he took *Captaine Pipeau's* basin, so that when, ten minutes later, a S.S.W. wind wafted the smell of the engines down the companion-way, and the Captain woke up suddenly——

But let me draw a veil.

Of course, there was a most awful fuss, the pair of them struggling and clinching all over the cabin, until friends on both sides interposed. And all, dear, over a rubbishing basin! Why, as a distinguished military officer, who was present—a Captain Kelly—suggested, if they were so short of china, didn't they stay behind and have three rounds in the old style on Folkestone sands for a complete bedroom set?

Something was said about a duel, and cards were exchanged, it being left for the French Captain, as challenger, to send his seconds to Sprat. As, however, I don't think Sprat gives the name of his only club—The Supper, in Percy Street—on his card, the matter may die a natural death. There are many curious traits in the French character. In the Avenue de la Grande Armee last night, a young and delightful married lady hopped out of bed,

flung her dainty arms round a gentlemanly burglar, and hugged him deliriously, while her simple husband ran half way to Batignolles for a *gendarme*. Twenty minutes later, when the husband returned with an *agent*, the polished ruffian had escaped, and madame was lying exhausted on the bed coverlet. She only rallied a little and smiled faintly upon being assured by her frightened spouse that the intruder had taken nothing—all of which goes to show that the average Parisian husband does not possess the inordinately jealous disposition with which he is accredited.

Whilst “doing” the Passages this morning, we encountered poor Lord Billericay, who has been living in the gay city ever since he left his cattle-ranche in Southern Carolina, from whence he caused to be sent to his countess a cleverly contrived photograph of himself dangling from the outstretching limb of a gaunt oak-tree by a rope noose, with a howling mob in the background. He admits it may have been a rather base subterfuge, but it was cheaper than paying his debts, and easier, on the whole, than getting a divorce, with the Queen’s Proctor in his present state of activity. He alluded with great bitterness to his matrimonial affairs, and

spoke of the morning on which his confidential valet came to him in his bedroom, and said that he wished to leave his service. "Good gracious!—why?" asked his lordship. "Have you any reason?" "Your lordship has been kindness itself," replied the servant quietly, "but her ladyship has lately made advances towards me which it is impossible to misunderstand, and I believe that in leaving I am acting as a friend towards your lordship." "A friend!" cried the peer, struggling with his emotion; "nay, far, far more than a friend—a friend would have prolonged his visit!"

Though Mdlle Demi-Syphon is doing big things at the Moulin Rouge, and on the night of our visit her pretty feet twinkled in the atmosphere, her lively legs twisted through space till the little ring formed by the onlookers seemed full of snowy laces and silk stockings, and though, finally imagining that she was an acrobat, she up-ended herself, and walked around on her hands in an attitude calculated to keep her memory green in the minds of the spectators for many moons to come, I was impatient to see Otéro at the Folies-Bergères, and last night Charlie took me there. She is a seductive little puss, but—oh, the *pied de* Otéro; it is a very liberal tootsie, indeed. It was

very kind of some Johnnie of hers to send her a horseshoe, I thought, but why not a *pair*? But perhaps she's got a wooden leg. Had she worn her corsage one wee bit lower, I would have known for certain.

I have been thinking of submitting to *Fraternity Fair* the "Hard Case" of young Lord Gordonhurst, who is staying here with his pretty wife, and who, while showing a decided liking for French male society, is either too stupidly jealous of his little treasure, or too mistrustful of her to get on at all smoothly with his guests. Of course, dear, you know what Frenchmen are. They have hands which are ever ready to give a warm response to an unintentionally tender clasp, and toes which, when touched quite accidentally beneath the table, search out and return a soft pressure on the dainty *bottine* of their hostess. Now, Lady Gordonhurst may be rather given to innocent flirtations of this kind, and her husband may have good grounds for his lack of confidence in her, but, though it must be admitted that truth is less terrible than uncertainty, Gordonhurst's invariable act of suddenly shouting "Hullo there!" and at the same instant overthrowing the entire table and peering beneath it, is highly reprehensible, and calcu-

lated to involve him in serious trouble before long.

And now, dear, to answer your queries. I am afraid you will find it rather difficult to alter your beaded mantle into a couple of pretty *camisoles* and an autumn *toque* ; still, there is no Act of Parliament to prevent you from trying. I think you should certainly accept the seat in the nobleman's box at the Promenade Concerts, and your sky-blue satin, slashed with orange, will look very well. Under the circumstances you mention, however, I should send for one of Madame Aurélie's celebrated self-heaving chests, about which I have already told you. They have been the making of many a poor girl. I am more than delighted to hear that your pretty little friend, the *modiste*, has got over her little affair ; it is indeed a case of the survival of the "fittist." Certainly, she will have to make a personal application to the sitting magistrate at Bow Street — a Mr Lushington, I believe.—Adios dearest little Madge, your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

OCTOBRE

HALF MOON STREET.

DEAREST LITTLE MADGE,—

You may very well upbraid me for keeping you so long without a letter, but all my time, dear, during the past fortnight, has been taken up in flitting about from one girl's wedding to another's—in all, I went to five!—until at last I became such an enthusiast on the subject that I really didn't dare trust myself to walk down Regent Street Quadrant alone; the mere sight of the trousers in the tailors' shop-windows filled me with such indescribable longings to flirt! And yet Lady Cook says that "The affections are freer and fuller and altogether more natural among the lower and middle classes than in the best society." Clearly she does not know *our* "push," as the belles of New York say.

Why, only yesterday I was looking over some of the entries in the dainty little green morocco diary that the dear Duke left behind him at my

cottage ornée at Datchet last summer, and I think these two neat, but simple, extracts alone will suffice to refute Lady Cook's absurd statement :—

TUESDAY, JULY 21. — Awoke feeling devilish seedy. Cleaned my teeth and took an anti-pyrin powder. Better. Ordered the Ralli cart and drove down to dear little Mrs Leslie-Biffins's, at Richmond. Her matrimonial incubus not being expected till evening, took her for a long drive round Surbiton, Ditton and Esher. Had tea in an arbour at the "Rollicking Bookmaker," most select rural tavern, with tea gardens, near Sandown Park. As sweet little woman was just finishing her second cup, a beastly daddy-longlegs (*Paterfamilias longicrus*) emerged gracefully from teapot, and "winked his other eye," as it were. Delightful little woman fearfully shocked. Fainted. Nothing for it but to cut her staylace, and —er—other strings. As she came to, begged me to summon waiter for the sake of propriety. Got her back to her place in time for dinner, buying her, at a little bookseller's shop on the way through Kingston, two pretty texts, framed and glazed, for the wall of her beast of a husband's dressing-room: "Perfect love casteth out fear."—*John* iv. 18, and "I escaped with the skin of my teeth."—*Job* xix. 20. So, thank goodness, *that* was all toodley-oodley.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22.—Called on the dear little soul again this morning, but a bit too early. Thought Biffins would have been in town, but he hadn't started. As he saw me drive up to the house, had to say I'd called to inspect the gas-meter! Wondered whether gas-meter inspectors *usually* called round in yellow Ralli carts with page-boys behind. Thought it improbable. The Biffins cad said the meter was "all wrong to blazes." He turned the gas off, and insisted on my disconnecting meter and taking it away with me. Devilish risky thing to do, but had to do it. The Biffins bounder said he'd

a great mind to accompany me back to Gas Company's office to give the "infernal thieves" a bit of his mind. I forced a smile — don't remember how — said I should have been delighted, but had to go and disconnect *another* meter at — couldn't remember where, but my "mate" (the page-boy) knew. Don't recollect what he said to *that*, but felt glad to get away. Subsequently met dear little woman at trysting-place on towing-path. Said she feared her hubby "sniffed a rodent," so bought a present for her to give to him — a pink necktie with orange cherries growing on mauve stems and blue leaves. Feel, somehow, that he and I are quits.

But this is not telling you my news. I think that the very first intimation I had of Florrie's approaching nuptials was by way of a cheery paragraph in *Society Small Talk*. It ran :

DAME RUMOUR hath it that Mr "Willie" Mack-Giffin Mooner and Miss "Florrie" Effingham, both well known on the Turf and in smart society, will shortly join hands and occupy the same flat. It has been noticed that "Willie" has been decidedly attentive of late, and we trust he intends to "part" his £2 : 2 : 6 to the Vicar-General in Doctor's Commons in the usual way, and that the charming bride will not allow herself to be linked to the man of her choice according to the customs of his family, by which she may find herself, all too late, stranded on the shoals of a too-exclusive civilisation. The breakfast will be at the Monte Carlo Hotel, and covers will be laid for two.

It turned out that the insinuation contained

in the *Small Talk* paragraph was only too well founded; when the crucial time arrived, it was found that the bridegroom was "shy" (as they say in poker), by nearly fourteen shillings, so the whole thing had to be put off, for, though Florrie was fearfully disappointed, we all urged her to be firm, and insist upon a ceremony. She stood there, poor girl! biting her lips and with great salt tears filling her eyes, whilst "Willie" went through his jeans, but all that she said was: "Well, well, this *is* a bit o' box-fruit if you like."

Now Veneta Withers' wedding, which was on the following day to Florrie's, was a very much nicer affair altogether, although the bridegroom's "best man" was a hopeless duffer who, in his fearful anxiety to coruscate, was constantly doing or saying something foolish. I am unreservedly of opinion that no bachelor should ever be entrusted to perform the duties of "best man"—a married man is so much more likely to act sensibly and considerately. Just fancy, you know at St Pancras Station, where, in his inexperience, this noodle had got the railway people to spread red carpet down the platform, and had positively had a saloon carriage reserved and labelled—I should have told you before, that they were going

to spend the honeymoon in Scotland—he came hursting through the crowd, with a huge bundle of newspapers and magazines in his two arms, and blurted out to the happy pair, already in possession of the carriage—

“Here you are! It’s a precious long journey, and you’re sure to want—*plenty to read!*”

Never, never shall I forget how everybody giggled: even the Scotch guard bit half-way through the stick of his green flag in his attempts to preserve a respectful demeanour.

Weddings and rumours of weddings fill the air. (This sounds like a honeymoon on the Big Wheel; but of course I don’t mean anything of the kind.) I must admit, dear Madge, that I am always delighted to hear of a wedding, for it means, if nothing else, that at least *one* of my unfortunate sex has got on new clothes all through, perhaps for the only time in her life. And here let me utter a mild protest at the intrepidity of some trousseau reporters in a certain ladies’ newspapers. The other week one of them (who I know is masculine, and I hope is married), after describing acres of the “charming bride’s” silks, satins, poplins, and grenadines, fairly took a header into her *lingerie*. “The combinations,” he wrote, “have finely pleated frills edged with lace. The

frills are open on the outer side, this arrangement taking away the pressure of the seam and preventing the tearing that so often results in the old style." Then he passes on to silk-lined night-dresses with blouse bodices, and many other things, till one cannot help feeling how proud and happy the bridegroom must be to feel that the public knows, as it were, every tuck in his wife's *jupon*, and just to a crease how neatly her nighties fit her!

Speaking of weddings, Edie Abbot, whom I daresay you will remember—tall, brunette girl, who was chucked out of the Stephanotis one night, on the ground that she wasn't a fit associate for the company, and whose subsequent action at law was met by the club committee's explanation that they meant it for a compliment—goes into double harness on Wednesday, the 18th. Save that at Edie's age a girl could hardly make a mistake if she tried, I should not call it a wonderful match, there being a deal of mystery about the bridegroom-elect, who is described as the President of a Home for Disabled Thought Readers. Edie, I suppose, would call herself an authoress. Like a wild duck that steals off and lays an egg in the oil-box of a once threshing machine, Edie conceives little "gems of poetic

thought," as she calls them, and goes and leaves them on the tables of obscure editors, with stamps for their return. The editors, being mostly poor, confiscate the stamps, and then are obliged to print the verses. Here is one of her "gems of poetic thought" :—

"Oh, woman is an open book,
And should be read, 'tis stated.
She also should be 'bound' and 'pressed,'
And properly punctuated."

This seems to show that one sure road to literary fame is to keep some needy editor in beer. I am sending you quite a collection of her "gems of thought," in a large sack ; also an erotic play of hers, in imitation of the style of that ancient poet, the Markee de Bovrille. You may like it ; but *I* think that as an erotic playwright Edie couldn't draw a corporal's guard from a canteen counter. Also I am sending you the programme and list of stall-holders at the Bazaar we gave in aid of the funds of the Housemaids' Knee Hospital ; it was *such* a delightful function ! Pretty Mrs Meltyng-M'Glew came as the picture of the lady on the posters, and was a huge success. Pretty women can make almost any costume popular. It is perfectly marvellous to notice how little, if any, clothing an attractive

woman may wear to become the cynosure of all eyes, and this she certainly was, although Charlie, in his brutal way, said she could have "done with a little more *chiffon* round the cuttle-bone." At my stall we took—just think, dear—twenty-one pounds. It would have been twenty-three, but two of the coins the honorary secretary said were "Jacks," which some doubtless vulgar person had rung in on us. Such meanness, when the cry was for charity, was despicable, though it did not warrant Ethel Fraser in alluding to the unknown cad as a "sanguinary glyptodon."

Adversity should make us tolerant, not profane. But you will be dying to hear about the stalls. One article, which I sold to a well-known racing duke, was a pretty and novel *portière*, made out of old oil-cake sacks, edged with torchon lace. This (and a kiss) fetched four guineas; meantime Ethel had "locked horns," as they say in the deerstalking hielands, with a wealthy sporting baronet, and stuck him with a sawn-down petroleum barrel, stained and mounted on legs to form a smoking chair. The impulsive girl remembered when the thing had been sent home that she had omitted to remove the four small wrought nails from the tub, but she declined to wire to him about it. He would probably never

sit in it, she argued, and even should he do so suddenly, his language would be no surprise to his lady mother and sisters who live with him.

On each evening, in aid of the same good cause, a theatrical performance was given in our pretty new hall at Cricklewood by a Mrs Rokeby-Bangers, a society amateur who aims to elevate the stage, but appears to me to find the plums too high for her pole. She is fearfully subject, I am told, to nervous hysteria, and when this attacks her she has recourse to stimulants to brace herself; still the "criticism," penned by the reporter of the *Hendon Headlight and Welsh Harp Courant*, the only representative of the Press who was present, was undeservedly scathing. "What a *Rosalind*, what a *Lady Teazle*, what a *Paula Tanqueray* is here, if she would only let the 'sherbet' alone!" he wrote. I have since heard that personal and petty spite was at the bottom of this disgraceful attack, the editor of the Hendon paper having called and sent up his card about tea-time on the previous Sunday afternoon, just as if there was a press Free-List for everything!

Certainly Mrs Rokeby-Bangers' *Portia* was, as Charlie expresses it, "a bit of Nelson's old flagship"—pretty rotten—and its reception by a

coarse galleryite led to an unfortunate *contretemps*. I must tell you that Mrs Bangers came on, dressed as a Venetian doctor of laws, and scarcely had she spoken the impressive sentence :—

“It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven” . . .

—when a loud and offensive noise, like the rending of glazed calico, made by obtruding the wet tongue between the closed lips, and by low cabmen and persons of that class, called a “raspberry,” came from the gallery. So loud and resonant was it that it was quite impossible for Mrs Rokeby-Bangers to pass it over unnoticed ; but, still, it was certainly very bad policy on her part to pause in the delivery of Portia’s speech, and, addressing herself to the horrid brute who was still making the noise, reply in tones of cynical banter :—

“All right, don’t tear it ; I’ll take the piece !”

A man friend of Charlie’s, whose name I have forgotten, but who supped with us in the East Room on Wednesday, endeavoured to impress on me how well some women look to what others do in evening dress, and he raved over a “lovely creature” who was sitting with an Aldershot man, whom I seem to know, at another table. And who do you think the “lovely creature” was,

Madge? Minnie Cameron—positively! The poor man was awfully smitten. He declared she was “born to be loved,” and I might have told him, only I didn’t like to, that she’s been in pretty constant employment all the years I’ve known her. She wore a bodice of tea-rose yellow that left very little to the imagination, whilst her hair was caught back in a sort of burnished penny roll. She wore little else save that perennial look of disdain and those astonishing paste earrings.

I went to Newmarket last week, despite the inclemency of the weather. I have always persisted in saying that a macintosh on Newmarket Heath in October is like a dose of croton-oil. You may not want it often, but when you *do* want it, you want it badly. I’m sure when I got back to St Pancras after seeing the Cesarewitch the only dry spot about me was the roof of my larynx. You must know that I went down with a new admirer, a literary one this time, dear. He is the sporting editor of a new trade organ called *Wool*, and is a nice enough boy when he keeps himself in hand. This was not the case to-day, I am sorry to say—sorry because a girl needs a better chaperon coming home from a race-meeting than a man who, after reserving a compart-

ment in the train, brings in a nigger minstrel and a man who juggles with guinea-pigs, and entertains them with lobsters. I should have given him the cold and final shake after he'd paid my cabman, but that he has been very good up to this, and really these trade papers seem to bring in a deal of money.

What new songs and music can I recommend you to get? My dear child, how very fortunate I must say it is, that you should ask me that question on the very day on which a perfect cartload of new pieces has reached me from Messrs Hoopiron & Screw. Although it may be some time before Belgravian mammas meet with a ballad so suitable to their daughters as the late Mdle. Bellvodini's, "It's ten to one on the striker, the striker!" most of the following should be warmly welcomed by our singing sisters :

The Little Pigeon (Fairlamb), is a bold, fearless narrative in song of the glories achieved by a squad of Her Majesty's favourite regiment of Lumberers. It goes :—

" We found a mug from the country
We took him in to the Pav.,
He stood at the bar with a big cigar,
We asked him what he would have :

We collared his cash, his pin, and his watch,
He seemed a regular beery 'un ;
And then we went, and the money we spent
In boozing at the Criterion."

Loved Voices is capable of touching the most hardened heart :

"'Tis sweet to hear the blithe cashier
Who tells you that you've over-drawn,
'Tis sweeter far to hear the jar
Of soda-water cork at morn ;
But, oh ! more sweet it is to meet
The girl with whom last night you dined,
And hear her tell how she was—well—
Run in at Marlbro' Street, and fined."

The Last Milestone is perhaps more suited for the rural Vicarage than the urban drawing-room, describing, as it does very prettily, the return of an honest farmer from the fair, when the old fellow is, as they say in Gloucestershire, " market-peart." It is full of opportunities for the singer who can simulate an alcoholic wobble :

" I staggered over the meadow,
I scraped my face in the wood,
Where the hawthorn grows I tore my clothes,
And I fell wherever I could.
I felt unsteady upon my pins,
I'd a perfectly imbecile smile,
But the place where I ended by barking my shins
Was the stone of the final mile."

Parted will readily commend itself to every one who ever owed money to a bookmaker and intended to continue doing so :

“To make some cash I reckoned,
 On backing horses,
 Of course I backed the second,
 Oh crumbs ! My losses !
 I did not feel downhearted,
 But fancy free ;
 Perhaps you think I parted ?
 Not me.”

Love is Blind is just the sort of piece to suit the young songstress who is considered to be a sort of Arthur Roberts in petticoats, and could do a bit of “mugging” :

“We met by chance—a ball at Covent Garden
 Where one sees things both wonderful and strange
 My dress was plain—a simple Dolly Varden
He was enclosed within a Kitchen Range,
 He spoke of love, this saltatorious toiler,
 And asked one favour—well I recollect—
 Oh, would I ‘pour a drink into his boiler,’
 He was *so* dry—or words to that effect.”

Chorus—

“Since Love is Blind, one has a mind
 To make a slight allowance of some kind
 But no rule on earth is breachless
 And when love is—simply speechless,
 Got strabismus—alcoholic—*Love is Blind !*”

Perhaps you would like to see the second verse :

“ We met by chance—’twas on a coach at Sandown
He stood below, whilst I was on the box
He spoke of lunch, and offered me his hand down
Then turned his head, lest I should show my socks.
Alas !—one slip ! My skirts flew like a feather ;
Caught on some hook or iron that did project,
And down I came—well, in ‘ the altogether ’—
Or words, some words to that effect.”

To which this is the chorus :

“ But Love was blind—completely blind
And fortune to this little maid was kind,
For the wind was very gusty
And the course was beastly dusty
And he—couldn’t see for powder ! Love *was* blind ! ”

By the way, that fellow De Daubigny, or whatever his name was, who used to give such jolly suppers in Sackville Street, was married yesterday at St George’s to one of the homeliest girls I have ever seen. Money, of course, for it’s notorious that he couldn’t get a kite to rise in Cork Street, even though he took the tail off and got every pal he knew to come and shoo for it. Poor Belle ! She *would* go and see the ceremony, much as I begged her not to. The brute caught sight of us (for I should have added that I went

with her) as he passed up the aisle, but I smiled as though the impending tragedy was a matter of not the least importance. Belle tried hard to, too, but the hot tears of disappointed love stood in her eyes, and she bit into the covers of the hymnal the pew-opener had given her till three of those wonderful anti-corrosive teeth burst from their gold settings! Poor Belle! one may well wonder whether she ever will go off. It is hard to teach an old dog new tricks, they say, and she, after leading every suit in the pack, as it were, in order to keep up with the procession, has failed to land her fish! Is not this a trifle tough? Still, "'tis not in mortals to command success," as the defeated co-respondent remarked as he clasped the fair respondent in his arms in the dark corridor in which the two D. Courts are situated; "but we'll do more, Sempronia, we'll——"

But that is another story, as Mr Kipling says.
Sincerely yours, sweet coz. MAUDE.

NOVEMBRE

STILL AT THE FLAT.

DEAREST MADGE—

As Charlie was saying only this morning, Winter seems suddenly to have burst upon us like the unexpected return of the husband who said that important business at Stockton-on-Tees would keep him away all night ; and with the advent of the "parky," or more than merely chilly mornings, a Stiffy-Smith fruit-salad will be found a popular dish at the breakfast table. They are quite worthy the name they bear, that of the great genius who invented them. Slice into a salad bowl three or four mellow William pears, a tomato, a quince, and half a pine-apple. Pour over all this two bottles of old brown brandy and bottle of curacoa. Drop in, here and there, a red chili, and mix.

Aunt Parker, who is staying with us for "nerves," took three tumblers of it, and then fell

into the fender with a crash, that Charlie said recalled nothing so forcibly as the devastation of Hell Gate. The poor old dear struggled and got up, but almost immediately sat down with such great suddenness that she involuntarily raised her right hand to her head to see if her spine had pierced the crown of her best cap. Her second attempt to rise, this time by the aid of the polished coal-box, might have been more successful had she not forgotten that the receptacle was on castors, so that it carried her swiftly across the carpet and caused her to butt a large hole with her head in the centre door of the sideboard. By the way, she has already taken to her jaegers, and is also wearing a red-brown lisle-thread hose, with embroidered potato-plants up the sides, finished off with a yellow Colorado tuber-bug on the inside head of the tibia, with a plain, carpet-list garter.

Garters, by the way, are more ornate than ever this autumn, although I can fancy I hear you ask, "Yes, but who is to see them?" My dear, I answer you as a girl friend of mine was once answered. She went to an artist in the Rue de la Paix for her trousseau, and on being shown something quite startling in nightgowns, asked timorously, "But—er—do you really think it is

good form?" "Oh, mam'selle," was the gushing answer, "*everybody* will be in *r-r-raptures*!" At any rate, dear, there is your intended husband, to begin with, and you certainly told me that he thought of taking you ballooning. "If a man is irresponsible to a lace petticoat, it proves that he has no refinement of mind," I remember having read in a book called "The Ascent of Woman," but I think a nicely adjusted brown silk stocking with a turquoise garter is much more likely to achieve a bull's eye. "She who is really proficient in the science of sorcery," said the same writer, "will never commit the artistic crime of beginning her bodice too late, for she has realised the truth that men are not attracted so much by revelation as by suggestion."

Walking home from the Aquarium the other night (or it may have been the early A.M., for I paused for a final peg of such awfully good gin at the last licenced house in Queen Ann's Gate) across the Parc St Jamais, whom should I fall across, literally as well as figuratively, at the foot of the Duke of York steps, but Millie Madderson. I had not seen her since—oh, ever so many years ago—she was expelled the High School. She is *so* altered! The remnant of what had once been a smart straw hat, sat

jauntily upon her head, the hair close cropped behind, with a "fringe," hanging over her classic forehead like a bunch of timothy over the door of an unlet house. She sat upon the lowest step, gazing sadly at her feet, which were encased in a pair of men's cast-off sidesprings, and, as I fell over her, she ejaculated :—

"J'yer, you incandescent gillie, where are ye steering to?"

Making myself known to her she told me her life's story. The old, *old* chestnut, with a long white beard on it. And she told it all with the bitter air of the cynic who has seen the whole of the elephant, has tasted every pleasure, and now only wanders about seeking a suitably dramatic death. "I've seen what I've seen. Oh my lost youth!" she exclaimed, not knowing, of course, that Mr Henery Arthur Jones had used up that speech in *The Tempter*. And only to think that a few years ago, more particularly on the night of Foxhall's Grand Prix, she was caressed as the idol of the most noble *roués* in the most elaborately gilded saloons of the gay city, when the ridiculously wealthy Baron Stoomvaart filled the grand piano at Bignon's with priceless Steinberg cabinet, and the Marquis Mahoney steeped his unmatchable pearl shirt-stud in

Kummel, and then swallowed it. And she, the companion of Ducs, and the Saturday-to-Monday ruler of princes, should come down to positive penury! Poor Millicent! How utterly wretched is her lot; and yet, in the great human hive we must all be, or do, something.

Which reminds me, dear, of an old school-fellow of mine who has recently turned her attention to—what *do* you think?—burglary! nothing less, I assure you.

Her name is Minnie Pettifer; she comes of a really good family, and received an expensive education on the Continent. She had thoughts at one time of becoming a lady dentist, and in fact took the L.D.S. of the College of Surgeons, but found, on attempting to practice, that public prejudice was against her. She tried in various ways to earn her own living—painted terra-cotta plaques, became amanuensis to a dermatologist, canvassed the City offices with fountain pens, made a small “silver” book in a ladies’ tea-and-crumpet club—but, bless you, the poor girl couldn’t get bread and butter at any of them, and then it was that she conceived the idea of taking up burglary in an æsthetic and artistic way. She adopted the rational costume, and, as far as she could regulate it, “worked” only

bachelors' flats. As you may easily imagine, it came near being racy once or twice, but Minnie generally got away in time, or she says she did. One of the "tightest places" she was in was a medical students' flat, somewhere in Bloomsbury, which she broke into one moonlight night. The poor young medico, it appears, had changed his last half sovereign much earlier in the day, and had only gone to bed because he couldn't afford to go anywhere else. Halfway through his beauty sleep Minnie came in through the window and disturbed him by falling over something on the bedroom floor—a mortar probably. The budding *Æsculapius* opened first one eye and then the other, and gazed with unmixed satisfaction on Minnie, who is a takingly handsome brunette, and must have looked prettily in her natty get-up, poising her electro-plated jimmy. "Hullo, my little Tootsie," cried the awakened sawbones, "what is it you are looking for?" Minnie glared at him with her dark eyes as though she would freeze the very marrow in his bones, and hissed: "Your money and your valuables!" "The first," said the young man sadly, "is absolutely tee-totally tuckered out; as for the valuables—well, there's a silver buttonhook and a gun-metal ticker, and a new Balls-Headley's

'Diseases of Women,' and my onyx sleeve-links, and my chum's new aseptic instruments, and all sorts of chattels lying about somewhere. Pack up everything that takes your fancy, and then give me a kiss. I haven't had a kiss for a fortnight!" What did she do? Why, just as the merry young medico started to get up she jumped out of the window—it was on the first floor, too!—and if those young students are at all sentimental, they are still keeping as a cherished memento the back width of Minnie's petunia cloth pyjamas, which caught on a nail as she went down.

The outdoor billing and cooing season being now well over, poor old Mr Billinger-Jenkins—the Sad Old Man with the Six Fair Daughters, as we always call him—has had the big umbrella-tent in his back garden taken down and put away till next year. The carpenter who was employed to do the job found, round and about the spot where the tent stood, thirteen pearl shirt-buttons, twenty-nine half-smoked cigarettes, eleven tooth-picks, one Cromwellian shoe-buckle, three Hinde's curlers, a packet of "buck-up cachous," twenty-eight hairpins, a season-ticket for the *Marguerite*, three chocolate-creams, a shave check, a pencil-case, and an artificial tooth, but none of the girls

are yet married, nor even engaged. Suitors were at one time as easy to accumulate as empty sardine-tins on the Kew foreshore, but none of them stayed in, as they say in poker. And this sets me thinking of sweet little Miriam Isaacs, than whom no Hebrew maiden ever angled harder to land a mate. Poor girl! I heard from her only yesterday. She and her husband, who was once a Christian of some loosely organised denomination, are living on a fifth floor in Marylebone and a distant relative. He promised, it appears, at his con- (or per-) version to become a devout Jew and "keep" everything. "Everything," according to his present notion, consists of late hours and a hatched badger, for baiting. Poor girl! when I called upon her this afternoon she was keeping some fast or other, during which she was not allowed to eat, wash, comb, or scratch, and the only article in her apartment, exclusive of a Kosher lard-tub she was seated upon, was a large bull spider reclining in a natural cobweb on the wall.

Had a delightful long letter from dear Wilhelmina this morning; she is staying with her marital incubus at Hastings. He has been up in Scotland shooting, it appears, and wherever it was that he stayed, they put him into a bed

that already had occupants, and, as Wilhelmina says, the horrid things must have been on the verge of starvation to judge by the appearance of Samuel's back. It looked, for all the world, like the fortifications and raised earthworks round Santiago de Cuba. Even now, she says, he sometimes leaves the table in the middle of a meal to agitate his punctuated body against the sharp corners of the sideboard. Terrible, is it not? She tells me, too, that there has been little or no sport this autumn over the Earl of Joceline's once estate, unless a harmless occasional game of "shove-halfpenny" between the men-in-possession can be so termed. Owing, unfortunately, to the earl's heavy losses on the turf, it is even said that the costly piano-organ, with which he is at present elevating the musical profession, is also heavily encumbered, and some gossips go as far as to hint that a first-charge has also been given on the monkey. Still, this may be the "darkest hour that comes before the dawn," for his lordship, as all the world knows, has marked literary abilities, and also possesses influence in the right quarter to secure him the much-sought-after post of dramatic critic to *Perry's Weekly Gazette*. Thus "Hope tells a flatterin' tale," as the

aquatic young buttermilk remarked when the cheap hosiers told him they could rig him out in boating flannels to look like a puffick gentleman for seventeen and nine.

"Hettie" asks me if I can recommend her some cheery songs and books, now that the long evenings are commencing, and I am only too pleased to be able to do so. The back-end crop of ballads is somewhat disappointing, though Signor Herberto Campobello's "You've brought yer tea-things with yer," deserves mention: also the rondel which runs:—

Strolling last evenin' I chanced to meet
 Disy, Disy,
 She lives with her mother in Stamford Street,
 Sweet little Disy Bell
 We 'ad a stroll and some drops of "Scotch;"
 'Ow many I'm sure I can't tell.
 Early this morning I missed me watch,
 An' the young lidy as well—
 Oh—

CHORUS

Disy, Disy, send me th' tombstone *do*.
 I'm 'arf crisy—besides it's no use to you.
 My missis will raise a beano
 Sich as York Road's not yet seen o,
 And I'll wait hard by while the fun runs high
 With a funeril car for two!

With regard to the books, she should certainly

get "Not in Stock, or the Suicide of the Shopwalker," a very thrilling work; also "Shocked! or the Dead Policeman at the Drinking Fountain." Another one is "Gone Away, or the Whipper-In and the Banker's Daughter," although it is rather "advanced," perhaps, for a girl who has seen so little of the seamy side of life. The characters are drawn with a lack of force, too. I would particularise the passage where the hero is discharged from Millbank after serving seven years for a copper coal-scuttle. His penitence and determination to lead a decent, Christian life, is drawn with the pen of a Hall Caine or a Grant Allen, but when, with the view of carrying this intention into effect, he advertises in *Gale's Mirror* for a situation as *a billiard marker*, the effect upon the sympathetic reader is somewhat marred.

How often is it seen, dear, that the very persons who are the first to spike the domestic batteries of others, are themselves absurdly "touchy" on the question of their own conjugal rights? This is not a conundrum, but a philosophical reflection bid for by the earliest and latest evidences of Mabel Macmunro's versatility. I daresay you remember her at the High School at Bourneminster? She used to relieve the

tedium of term time, and sink half her pocket-money by writing notes on scented, lace-edged paper to all the good-looking curates in the town, in each of which billets she used the single sentence, couched in an apparently agitated feminine hand——

"All is discovered—fly!"

She used to send off three or four of these every Saturday, and then turn up at the corresponding churches on the Sunday, to gloat over the spectacle of the assembled sheep, all a-wondering what had become of the shepherd. Well, she's married now, and, after leading the poor, inoffensive young fellow whom she succeeded in literally *roping* in, a perfect dog's life for nearly a twelvemonth, she is applying for a divorce, making a former parlourmaid of their's, who slept in the top attic of their little West Hampstead bungalow, the co-respondent. She reminds me somewhat of the idiotic young doll-wife who was unusually morose at the breakfast-table one morning, and who, on being interrogated about it by her fool of a husband, pouted out, "It's because I had a nasty dream about you, Doady, and if I dream once more that you have kissed another woman, I will never, never

“speak to you again, as long as I live ;” because Mabel is relying entirely upon a single “admission of unfaithfulness” (as she calls it) of her husband’s making. He was rather given to astrology, it appears, and she met him one evening going upstairs with a new fifteen-and-sixpenny telescope he had just purchased. Asking imperiously why he ascended towards the parlourmaid’s private apartments, he replied that he would be “Nearer to Heaven in Jane’s room !” Of course, Mabel’s decree will depend largely on what construction a common jury will put upon this sentence.

He is a perfect martyr to insomnia, according to Mabel’s account, but many young wives bring this on their husbands. I have known young men who, before marriage, would sweetly and placidly sleep in a boiler foundry within range of five-score of steam hammers, yet, after six months of matrimony, these same young fellows have started up in bed like frightened fawns at hearing the tinkle of a few coppers being abstracted from their trousers pockets.

In a letter I had from Clare Duff this morning, I observe that she uses a fresh surname, “Stanley,” and frequently refers to “the captain and I.” Well ! well ! Let me see—this is the

sixth. From the contents of her letter, however, I fear she has bitten off more than she can masticate. It appears that "the captain and I" went on a visit to the country place of some recently-made, but distinctly high-toned, friends. Upon the Sunday morning, at the breakfast table, their host, whose blue china teapot to be lived up to, was "Burke's Landed Gentry," remarked grandiloquently :

"Now, Captain, I don't know what your custom of a Sunday morning is, but I propose that we join the ladies at church. We've a delightful old church here, and I think you'll appreciate it."

"My dear lad," blurted the captain, kindly enough, "if you wish to make me feel like a stray cat in a strange garret, rope me into a church! Why, Great Spurgeon! I haven't seen the inside of a church since I was christened!" There was a painful silence, Clare says, in which one might have heard one's hair growing, and their visit came to an end the same evening. Now, dear, in the language of *Vanity Fair*, what should Vere do? I fear she has an adult pachyderm, of the order *elephas africanus*, on her hands.—I remain, dearest, yours always,

MAUDE.

DECEMBRE

MY DARLING MADGE,—

I had a great mind to be very, very cross with you after keeping me so long without a letter, but as you tell me you are going to get married, I suppose I must forgive you. Only fancy, dear! I am positively dying to know *who* he is and *what* he is like, for the only detail you vouchsafe me is that he has an income of £400 a year.

According to an old Japanese custom, of which you probably are aware, a bride's playthings are all burned on her wedding-day, typifying the end of her frivolous childhood, but as it is not usual in this country to cremate living toys, I suppose your old friend, the middle-aged widower will, like the red-skin, "lie low" — temporarily, anyway. Of course you would be simply mad to give him the irrevoc-

able mitten, for, with an assured income of only £400, how can you live up to the rate of £2000 a year if you frighten away Monsieur Juggins the J?

In affairs of this kind some women are apt to be criminally thoughtless—indeed it makes me quite hot and irritable to even relate to you an example of this carelessness. It is only twenty months ago since Fanny Bobitwell's "elderly stick-in-the-mud," as she invariably calls her hubby, allowed her to let out a floor in her pretty new house in Redcliffe Gardens, and her tenant, a Colonel Moppit, died of an overdose of bi-chloride of gold last week. Of course it is very sad, but, at the same time, Fanny's excessive and hysterical grief, and the fact that she has put her youngest baby into deep mourning, is causing no end of unfavourable comment. As that horribly horsey woman, Mrs Blew-Blunt, remarked, coming back from Gatwick Steeple-chases: "If the odds were ten to one on the lodger, what was a fair price about the two coupled?"

Of course, dear, I am always rejoiced to be of the least service to you, and will certainly tell you "what is the swagger wear for a December bride"; but, though much depends upon local

customs, I wouldn't ask the "dear fellow" any more rhyming riddles such as—

When is Mrs Colonel Gilbert
Like a walnut or a filbert?

if I were you, for, though, as you say, he laughed aloud during the sermon, and was reprimanded by the vicar, he will think of it afterwards, and it may shake his childish confidence in you.

As regards the colour of your dress, you can hardly make a mistake this winter. Colours—bright, loud, resonant colours—and the more hideous the combination the better. Bloomers are not much worn; but then, dear, they are cut so full that the wear rarely shows. A well-known November bride went away in emerald-green accordion-pleated bloomers of *mousseline-de-soie*, cut *en tablier*, and came back with a piece of fresh, raw beef-steak over the left eye.

Pray, dear, banish altogether your fearfully antique idea of giving a wedding breakfast. *Fin de siècle* people give *receptions*, which consist of *petits fours*, claret cup (Castle U P is good enough), tinned pineapple, and cigarettes (which they bring with them). But wedding guests—especially rustic wedding guests—will eat and drink anything and everything you set before

them ; indeed, I have known them, where the glasses were filled too full, to inhale priceless Perrier Jonet through the nostrils, so that they had to be pounded on the back by an equerry, groom, or best man.

It really is nonsensical of you, Madge, to pretend to be offended because we didn't invite you up for Fridoline's wedding : not a soul was there at the registry office save Pa, Ernest's parents (of course), Charlie, and myself. Ernest's parents, no doubt, had done all they could to dissuade him from the match at the last moment, but Charlie, as the bride's favourite brother, took the groom in hand, and showed him, out of the registrar's window, four of the "Panton Street gang" (I think they are called) who were to "put him through" in the event of his hesitating.

It was very pathetic at the last moment when the father of the bridegroom-elect called Pa aside, and, in a voice broken by emotion, said, that he thought it only right, before cementing such a close relationship, to mention that he had once had a little unpleasantness, which involved the loss of his liberty for seven years ; that during that time his wife had been guilty of more than one indiscretion ; that his youngest daughter

had been deeply wronged by the man he once called friend; and that his only other son had to get out of the 27th Hussars and the country in a bit of a hurry for writing his colonel's and lieutenant-colonel's names on an eighteen-penny bill-stamp. But, as Pa said, in his cheery, inimitable way: "Don't mention it, cully, don't mention it; you should see *our* family record!"

Ernest's behaviour at the altar reminded me of the young and bibulous undergraduate, who, having to read the lessons after a very late night, was observed to be holding on to the lectern for dear life, and who subsequently explained that he would have fallen head over heels "if it hadn't been for the blessed duck"! He was certainly well "oiled." Now they're married they get on together much better than I expected they would, although he has once or twice said that he hates—positively *hates*—sitting up and trying to keep awake through the long vigils of the night waiting for Fridoline to come home.

Already there has been one outcome of the wedding breakfast—(Not yet settled for, by the way, which is all the more hard on the contractor, since he told me that he had cut down his estimate to an almost profitless figure on the strength of Pa's assurance that the wedding

guests were mostly strangers to each other, in which case about forty per cent. less is eaten than where all are well acquainted)—in the shape of a betrothal between young Conrad Comeoff, of the Bays, and the still youthful widow of the late Lieutenant Lashins, who is still reported to be lost in the Soudan. It is rumoured that the charming bride-elect will leave Aldershot for town as soon as a few outstanding matters are settled with her landlady, whilst the gallant captain is overwhelmed with offers from his brother officers, who wish to have the honour of giving the lady away. So far, however, nothing has been settled—including the landlady. The interesting little widow claims to be an old Girton girl, though I should hardly have thought it after hearing her render the familiar old ballad as "What are the wild waves a-saying of." One of the guests, who was a young doctor with a very small practice, did hardly right, I thought, in distributing his business cards, but he gave an interesting scientific prediction to the effect that 1899 would be a great year for babies. He did not say how he arrived at that conclusion, but he probably felt it in the atmosphere; science is full of marvellous manifestations.

By the way, Clare Fraser has just got a baby,

and I went yesterday to see it. It is quite too droll for anything, dressed in its little Scotch clothes, with a kilt and a horn for snuff. It is to be christened to-morrow, being two days old, and I, being chosen its godmother, had to give it a present. I bought it a charming little spittoon at Mortlock's, and a manicure set. The beautiful mother looked exceedingly interesting in a transparent white lace *chemise de nuit*, but I thought perhaps it was a little early to have the Brothers Griffiths, Tom Costello, and Bessie Wentworth giving a music-hall entertainment in the bedroom.

No prettier picture of domesticity can be found, I think, than a sweet young mother lying in bed with her first-born; its quiet beauty, its mute pathos, must appeal even to those who have dropped in morals to the level of the poultry yard. And Clare Fraser has at least one sister who may be included in this category. The wretched girl—for she is only nineteen—left her husband in order to go glimmering with her “soul's affinity,” as she called a large, coarse, alcoholic corporal-of-horse in the Life Guards, with whom she now shares a single furnished apartment over a Danish butter shop in Albany Street. Her poor young husband was positively

distracted about it, and he wrote her a most pathetic letter, begging her to return to him, concluding with: "This separation is absolutely insupportable, and death seems the only alternative. O Irené, Irené, I cannot live without you!" "You cannot live *with* me, that's a dead cert," the heartless creature wrote back, "for my only apartment at above address is so very small that, after the corporal and I are in it—as we generally are when he's not on view at Whitehall in his tin waistcoat—there positively wouldn't be room for you!"

Charlie generally starts his Christmassing about the Cattle Show week, by putting on his most rustic clothes, some old leather leggings, mixing hayseed in his hair, carrying a carter's whip in one hand, and going up to High Street, Islington, to be "picked up" by thieves and sharpers. He says it is really great fun. Men who have suddenly come into huge fortunes, which they wish to place at the disposal of some utter stranger with an honest face to do good with, seafaring persons who have "just picked up this ring, cap'en," and don't know what it is worth or what to do with it, and many other cunning creatures who simulate simplicity, whereas they are quite familiar with every wrinkle in the old

pachyderm, as poor dear Socrates used to say, are deceived by Charlie's make-up into taking him in tow and buying beer for him. They drag him into tavern bars, stick large rolls of the paper obligations of the *Bank of Enjoyment* into his hand, and then go out into the crowd for five minutes, during which Charlie generally goes out also, but by another door, and again lingers in the street waiting for some *other* crook to come along, pump-handle his arm, and recognise him as honest Farmer Thongleathers. He wished me to go with him, but I have always found the odour of the Agricultural Hall on these occasions a trifle omnipotent—which reminds me of a pretty idea they showed me yesterday afternoon at Thorndale's. It is a charming little silver clothes-pin, to be worn on the nose at the cattle shows and other crowded assemblies where the atmosphere is liable to become too demonstrative.

Just as Charlie was ready to start, dear little Emmeline Kettlewell, who used to live just above me in Ridgmount Gardens, dropped in, looking so very *chic* in a vermilion serge skirt and a Liberty tea-gown, the pattern on which represented the growth and development of the vegetable-marrow plant upon a sky-blue background, and as she seemed very anxious to go with Charlie, and I

was half expecting a visit from Freddie Fitzgibbet, I raised no objection. At the same time, I was not prepared for them making such a very alcoholic outing of it, that they should be detained all night at the Upper Street Police Station where, Charlie assures me, they divide the sexes.

And now, dear, comes the season when the pretty little Robin Riding Hoods, or whatever it is they call them, hop about in the snow—the season when it should be our earnest endeavour to gladden the hearts of our fellow-creatures less favourably circumstanced than ourselves. Charlie has hit upon a splendid plan. In his clubs, and his restaurants, and divers other places, he remarks in a loud tone of voice : “ Shortly before Christmas, I shall give tips to all those who have waited on me well and carefully during the year.” And no one seems to get better service than he after uttering this generous statement. Waiters bring him the best dishes ; wine stewards neglect other customers to attend to him ; managers say pleasantly one day is as good for paying his bill as another ; uniformed outside-porters not only call him the smartest cabs, but carefully put him into them and tell the drivers his address—all this until the time comes for the disbursement of his tips, when it transpires, that one is Hermiston

for the Lincoln Handicap and the other Flying Fox for the Derby. This sort of prudence clearly comes from his mother's side—indeed direct from his maternal uncle, who regularly starts his Christmas preparations proper somewhere about the middle of October by roundly and vehemently abusing the parcels post, the carting delivery people, and railway companies and carriers generally. Nobody quite understands why, but everybody concludes that the old boy has just cause. On Christmas Eve there comes a wire from him :—

“Have sent you turkey and a dozen, with my heartiest good wishes for Merry Christmas.—UNCLE CHARLIE.”

And when subsequently informed that the package has not been seen, he only replies in a burst of indignation : “There, what did I tell you?” In this way he acquires a record reputation for liberality and open-handedness at the cost of an eightpenny-halfpenny telegram.

My own preparations for Christmas are of a most simple character. As Captain Jack Swisher, who was my first flame in the long, long ago, has put in an appearance in town, and persists in giving his little drawing-room entertainment of the Warrior's Return—(which con-

sists in his being struck with joyous, alcoholic astonishment whenever he sees me, and exclaiming: "WHAT, my little braided Jane!" in allusion to the way I then wore my hair, "Oh! COME TO ME ARMS!" etc., etc.)—in the East Room, the Trocadero, Romano's, and, in fact, anywhere and everywhere when he feels in the humour, my preparations entirely consist of a determination to get out of town—anywhere, in fact, where the captain is not. But just as intoxication is loathsome, so is total sobriety a terrible curse, especially in the society of women. Every little blemish in the belle of the evening is easily beheld by sober eyes, so that no ambitious girl can afford to forget that an ounce of old brandy will do more than a pound of pearl powder.

And now, dear little cousin, I charge my glass to you. Here's the old toast. — Ever yours affectionately,

MAUDE.

MORE GAL'S GOSSIP

JANVIER

HOTEL METROPOLE, BRIGHTON,
NEW YEAR'S DAY.

MY DARLING MADGE,—

Thanks, and very many thanks, and thanks again, dear little cousin, for your positively delightful New Year's gift. Nothing more exquisite than your sweet little filigree puff-box have I ever seen. It is adorable, it is superb; but since it is perfectly impossible with the prevailing skin-tight skirts to secrete such an article about one's body, and as only the most impulchritudinous pollies and mediæval tabbies still cling to the powder-puff—(and how is it that *you*, Madge, have failed to note that the modern girl, when she thinks she is unobserved, is wont to produce from the top of

her right stocking a lump of swansdown which has generally seen much service?)—I feel quite sure that you will not mind my sending the outer part of it to my brother in Pall Mall Place, to carry his cachous in. Poor boy! he was *so* depressed when I called on him yesterday. Being the coldest day in the year his gas was cut off, and relations between him and his landlady were much strained. He had a vague idea that he had asked some man from his old regiment to lunch at the Café Royal; he was certain that he had invited a girl to supper, and was wondering whether she would stand being given whelks and porter in Old Compton Street. He had no possible chance of pursuing the oof-bird at Lingfield unless a scratched horse won at Manchester; and he was sadly sorting his judgment-summonses in alphabetical order when there came a rap at the door. From force of habit he hid under the table, but it turned out to be, not a process-server but an old chum, who with cheery good-nature cried, "Here's a New Year's present for you, sonnie. I have noticed how devilishly careless you are with money, and have brought you a sovereign purse." And Algy took the present and wrung his friend's hand warmly, as, with a great gulping sob, he

hastily endeavoured to squeeze a half-penny, two sixpences, and a blue bone card-counter into what should have been a receptacle for nobler coins.

Our presence in Brighton at this moment is mainly due to poor Charlie's unsuccessful efforts at finance, for though we quite thought we had squared our most clamorous tradesman with a box at the play for him and his wife and his daughters,—bless you! we had a bankruptcy notice fired into us before we were out of bed next morning. He was only a fishmonger, but in his fishboy days he had been an ardent galleryite and had fairly “eaten” Macready, and Kean, and the elder Matthews, and, as ill-luck would have it, we had sent him to about the worst-acted swashbuckling play in London.

“You fellows are always howling about commercial depression,” once said the dear old Crowner to a bootmaker who had stuck a writ into him, “but there will *always* be commercial depression so long as you fools of tradesmen waste all your money in legal expenses!” Then again, Charlie's latest promotion, a limited company to put on the market a patent for boring the holes in macaroni by a much cheaper process than the one at present in vogue, did

not go to allotment ; and there have been various and divers other reasons why at times a sojourn in a coal-cellar with the door locked has seemed more enjoyable than a walk down Piccadilly in the height of the season.

But, down here, we are comparatively secure—indeed we ought to be actually cheerful, for if there is anything in this variegated old world brisker or brighter than a fine winter forenoon at Brighton, when the sun's good-morning kiss to "the front" is not too far off to be echoed, then I have lost the tally of it, and gone and corked myself, as dear old Juvenal says.

And now, dear, I am going to tell you of a sportive little incident that occurred here yesterday, part of which I observed with my own eyes, whilst the rest I plead guilty to ferreting out. I despise the gossips who are constantly saying they "couldn't help hearing" certain things. Why didn't they cough?

Anyway, yesterday afternoon, when the vestibule of the hotel was very full of people, as it generally is about an hour before dinner, who should enter but a certain young Mr Dullingham, who holds the responsible and dignified post of official inspector of hypodermic syringes, or something, to the stewards of the Jockey Club,

and with him was an over-dressed young person who was obviously not his bride. To a critical eye these things stand out as clear as moonlight falling on a dead mackerel that has been stranded on a muddy foreshore. Mark me, dear, whenever the male of a newly-arrived pair at a seaside hotel handles the female as if he were afraid he would break her, you may lay a slight shade of odds that she is a lawful bride; but when, on the other hand, the young gentleman scratches his head reflectively as he takes up the pen to register, whilst the young lady tosses her shapely head and sneers at the bureau clerk with all the effrontery of a brass plate, well—What ho! as somebody once observed in the auction rooms at Madrid.

As young Mr Dullingham turned into the office on the left-hand side of the hall, in order to register, he chanced to brush past the pillar of respectability who keeps the fines-for-running-in-wrong-colours and the extra-quid-for-saddling-at-the-post accounts at Weatherby's—a supremely reputable person—and it was very evident that the young gentleman who was monkeying with the seventh commandment was actively aware that he was dancing, metaphorically, on the front door-step of a full-sized scandal which

might fly back and hit him in the hereafter. So when the clerk behind the register handed Dick—as his familiars call him—a pen, he took it with an abstracted air, scrawled “Mr and Mrs Wilmington Wishard, Saffron Walden,” in the book, and doubtless felt devoutly glad to get it over.

The young couple had been allotted a suite on the third floor, and to reach the elevator they had to pass some forty or fifty people sitting in chairs, the men for the most part disinterestedly chattering; the women audibly criticising others to whom they were not known with that delicate sense of decency which distinguishes a congregation of middle-class ladies from a box of monkeys. But just as young Mr Dullingham was about to hand his little side-show, as dear Arthur Roberts says, into the lift, the loud voice of Mr Surcingle-Stubbs, a wealthy young gentleman, who owns a long string of steeple-chasers in training at Lewes, and who had been very condescending to Dullingham, hailed him from the passage leading from the smoking-room. There was nothing for it but to bundle the puss unceremoniously into the lift and go back to Surcingle-Stubbs. As the door of the lift closed and the car itself started heaven-

ward, Dullingham swallowed the lump that had risen in his throat as a famished ostrich would take down a brass door-knob.

Mr Surcingle-Stubbs was boisterously effusive in his welcome. Now that flat-racing was over, he said, he really did hope that Richard could find time to spend a few days at Lewes and look over the horses. He was training them on cow peas this winter. Bring the good lady down; by the way wasn't that the good lady he had seen entering the lift? Evidently embarrassed, Dick replied that it was. Really? Then they must all dine together. Mr Stubbs was expecting Selsey, who had all Lord Sandown's horses this winter, and was doing them on cow peas, too. Cow peas had never been thought anything of before, save as a horticultural exhibit, but both he and old Selsey found that horses thrived on them, and that was what Selsey was coming over to dine with him and talk about. He would take no denial. Dullingham and his wife must make up the quartette at his table.

Inwardly Richard Dullingham seemed to be much perplexed. Whilst it would have given to his spurious bridal trip the look of genuineness that he felt was sorely lacking, to have dined

with Stubbs and Selsey, neither of whom would ever be likely to encounter the legitimate Mrs Dullingham, he did not feel at all sure as to how the little bit of muslin would take a prolonged cow pea conversation. So he said rather rapidly, that nothing in the wide world would have given him greater joy and delight, but—er—but, well, the fact was that the little missus wasn't quite herself this evening. Stubbs was instantly most sympathetic and solicitous. What was the matter with her; nothing serious, he sincerely hoped?

Dullingham said it was—er—eh—yes, of course—lumbago. She was a perfect martyr to lumbago; several of her family had *died* of it. Frequently there were times when she could not sleep for weeks together for it, in fact——

But just at that moment the little golden-haired page-boy who flies about with the guests' telegrams and letters—dear Mrs Mortimer Todd-push, who seems to *live* here, calls the little fellow "Ringworm," because he runs around so much—appeared and cried aloud:

"Three hund'ed an' thirty-seven."

"That's mine," said Dullingham, turning round. "What is it, boy?"

"Lady says, sir," answered the boy, "that are you aware as you've only ten minutes to dress for dinner, and that she's nearly ready?"

"I'm mighty pleased to hear it," interposed Mr Stubbs, "for the lady's lumbago is evidently better. In ten minutes, Mr D., and our table's right over in the further corner there."

Upstairs young Dullingham found his fair companion already dressed for dinner in a ravishing frock of black *chiffon*, and looking perfectly radiant. As he rushed into the room and commenced to fling his clothing right and left, she slid up to him and planted a kiss on his lips that would have made the hair stand on an Egyptian mummy; but Dullingham was in a hurry to dress. As he clambered into his sable togs, he repeated Stubbs' invitation to dinner, but the scornful little brunette only replied with a mocking laugh. Had she known, she said, that he expected her to hold receptions, she would have been more careful than to come away without a wedding ring; as it was, not one of hers had enough plain gold band to it when twisted round to deceive even a Ridgmount Gardens night porter; if, however, he chose to do these funny things——, etc.

The awkwardness of the position almost forced

Richard, who hated little worries and vexed situations at every turn, to register a vow that henceforward he would try and subsist solely on home-made pastry—even in this iconoclastic age—but the reflection that even this desperate and heroic resolve would scarcely extricate him from his present shlemozzle, stopped him taking any such Utopian oath. Clearly he could do nothing but dart out as soon as he was dressed, and buy a ring at the nearest jeweller's. There was one, he remembered, at the western corner of Regency Square.

Three white ties fell martyrs to his haste, but Mamie only laughed as each crumpled strip of lawn was discarded. Finally, he got one perfectly square bow, right under his left ear, and with the reassured air of one who has striven with big things and vanquished them, he popped into the lift and descended, telling Mamie to await his return in the drawing-room.

It was no distance at all to the jeweller's at the corner of Regency Square, but, arrived there, he caught sight of Dick Dunn and his wife making selections from a tray full of gewgaws on the glass case of the shop counter, and as Dunn was well known to Dullingham, all thought of purchasing a wedding ring at *that* establishment was

altogether out of the question. With a heaving heart, therefore, Richard flew like a hare up Preston Street, bent on spotting in the Western Road some unfashionable shop where only the locals bought their ornaments and got their watches cleaned. As his luck would have it, he hit upon just such a shop at his first turn. It was old-fashioned enough to have stood in Gomorrah—or even Zoar—and as he pushed open its single glazed door, a bell above his head rang out with a resonance and clearness which would have been ruined by a steady flow of customers.

A shock-headed young man, with weak eyes and an expression like the seven years of famine of Scripture history, produced a tray of rings and a sort of short wooden baton with marks upon it. What size, please?

Richard had taken Mamie's size for rings before. One that wouldn't quite go over the second joint of his right-hand little finger would suit excellently. Such a one was soon found.

"No paper, thankye," said the fidgety customer. "How much?"

The young man answered that the ring was 22s., but he spoke with an air of preoccupation and gazed rather anxiously through the little

door-window of the parlour that was behind the snop. Apparently not seeing what he desired in there, he stamped furiously on the floor, and in a minute or two a delightfully bland and clean old gentleman, whose black silk stock was not made in the last quarter of the century, made his appearance, seemingly from below.

"Weddin' ring, sir," said the shopman curtly to the bland old gentleman, as he picked Dick's sovereign and a half up from the counter and went to the till to get the change. The old gentleman nodded his head approvingly, and his beaming smile became more expansive.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said putting on quite a paternal tone, and addressing himself to Richard, "but I respectfully tender you my heartiest congratulations, and hope that you and the dear young lady who is to share your future fortunes may be very, very happy. It is the custom of our house, whenever we sell a wedding ring, to ask the lady, through the bridegroom elect, to do us the honour to accept as a slight contribution to beginning housekeeping a trifling present of half a dozen of our Nonpariel Bonanza electro-plated teaspoons, which we warrant to keep their colour and wear pure white all the way through. We have taken the

liberty of including them in the package with the ring, sir, and, in reiterating our sincere good wishes for your happiness, we trust your union may be blessed by children, for happy indeed is the man who has his quiver——”

“Oh, go to Hell!” roared the bridegroom elect, as, grabbing his eight shillings with one hand and his purchases with the other, he brushed abruptly out of the shop.

Mr and Mrs Wilmington Wishard of Saffron Walden did not dine with Mr Surcingle Stubbs and Mr Selzey that evening. For after Mrs Wilmington Wishard had waited, and waited, for her supposed husband's return, until she had found out that the dinner had run its course as far as the *entrées*, she let her temper have the upper hand, and, ashamed to remain alone in the drawing-room, returned to her bedroom in a decided huff. It was there that young Mr Dullingham found her ; it is there that I propose to leave them. .

But I should add that a few minutes after the time of Dullingham's return, one of the cheeriest members of the Brighton Sailing Club, down on the beach almost opposite the hotel, was struck heavily upon the hat by some falling parcel, just as he was steering himself in at the

club door to get one for the bacilli and ascertain what had won the last race at Plumpton. And picking up the package and examining its contents, he presently threw all his brother-members assembled in the smoking-room into a state of great amazement by making the extraordinary announcement :

“ By God, boys, it's raining teaspoons ! ”

Which goes to prove, Madge, as that weak-eyed old evangelist used to declare in the old days in Hyde Park, that “ The way of the transgressor is 'ot.” But I must tell you of a strange meeting.

Last evening I was going down to East Street to order some gloves, when——“ Oho ! vintner, brandy ere we swoon ! ” as dear old Hughie used to exclaim—whom do you suppose I ran across ? But, there, you never would guess—poor Freddie Faux Pastonne, the impecunious youngest son of the Earl of Lundyisland, actually. He was hopelessly “ broke,” as usual, but this time by a very strange mischance. Of course, being a quadruple bankrupt, and “ wanted ” as well on heaven only knows how many committal orders, he “ *dare* not have money,” as he said, but, feeling desperately in need of a few days out of town, he got an Italian restaurateur in London to cash him a

note-paper cheque on the London and County Sand Bank for a "pony," with nearly all the proceeds of which he boarded the Pullman at Victoria. About half way to Brighton, when the train was travelling at quite sixty miles an hour, and the dear engine was beginning to feel a trifle run down, an old fogey who had been dozing in his chair with a silk handkerchief over his head, awoke with a shout, as vulgar persons and those who falsify their cash-accounts frequently do, and cried out that his note-case had been stolen from his pocket. It contained four new five-pound notes, he said, and "no living soul was a-going to leave that train" till he got his money back. Foreseeing an all-round search, and having exactly four new five-pound notes, the origin of which he would rather not go into (for by this time it was fair to presume that the Italian had realised the fact that the Sand Bank was a shoal), in his own pocket, poor Freddie began to feel extremely uneasy. So in order to avoid complications, he slipped out of the car, and crossing three or four platforms forward, reached the smoker. Here, under the pretence of drawing himself a glass of iced water, he tucked his folded notes under the filter, and then returned to be searched. Needless to relate, the old gentleman

did not get his notes back—neither did poor Freddie, for whilst the search by the conductor was going on, the front half of the train, including the smoker, was switched at Three Bridges, and taken on to Eastbourne! No wonder he seemed downcast, that a sense of his sheer loneliness oppressed him, for though the Faux Pastonnes are a proud and wealthy old family, and can, I am told, trace their genealogical tree right back to the skeleton of a Carthaginian welsher, now in the Bideford Museum, who came over here, B.C., in search of tin, and remained, they seem to have no use for their l.l. son. They simply ignore his existence—indeed Freddie said he would cheerfully walk the hundred-and-eighty odd miles between here and the coast of Devonshire, knee deep in snow, and swim the rest, to bite his own mother, but that, with his noble alleged father away shooting in the Highlands, there was no saying under whose roof his lady mother might be. With that he drew from his pocket a photograph of a still beautiful woman, taken in her coronet, standing at a sort of latticed window, overhung with gladioli and tin tulips, and spat at it savagely—conduct which might well shock any one who did not happen to be intimately acquainted, as I am, with the

merry Countess and her captivating but irresponsible little ways. Poor fellow! he had put up with enough, too, from his own girlish consort, to whom he had been devotedly attached, and who he never even suspected of infidelity until, during one of her periodical absences from home, she wrote to him from a hotel at Melton Mowbray which had been totally consumed by fire quite five weeks previously. These, added to his other misfortunes, seemed to have completely clouded his whole life, and he said he had quite made up his mind to commit suicide that very afternoon, only he unfortunately allowed the fashionable hour for doing so to slip by while drinking with some old race-course companions in the New Ship.

I am well aware that you consider me eccentric, little one, but dear old Brighton still holds my affection as tightly even as it did in my schooldays—those golden days when dear little fellows in Eton suits used to scale the rain-water pipes outside our schoolhouse—at times hanging on literally by their teeth—to pick off the little notes from the end of the rope made of garter-ribbons that were slyly hung from the bedroom windows. One still sees a great deal of nice people at Brighton—especially of the poor girls

who get caught by the four winds at the corner of Ship Street. By the way all the smartest women down here are wearing cinnamon-brown lace lisle-thread hose and old-rose "Gripwick" suspenders. The only drawback to Brighton is the early dining. I positively *cannot* eat in the declining sunshine, but Charlie goes down to the *table d'hôte* at half-past six, and, never missing his fences, is about two octaves ahead of me during the rest of the evening. How rapidly, by the way, the beach at Brighton is disappearing; and again, if the place is to continue to hold its own, the corporation will have to send out for more water. It was so shallow under the West Pier the other morning that the fish actually had to stand on their heads to get a drink, and the aroma——! It reminded me of an old well we had at the *pensionnat* I was once at at Bruges. Typhoid broke out and had carried off best part of the first class in calisthenics when they decided to clean out the well. It was then found to contain a goat, three copies of the unexpurgated *La Pucelle d'Orleans*, a tin dipper, about a gallon of angleworms that had met death locked in one another's arms, a pack-saddle, and a former dancing master, named Garnier, who had disappeared the night before the twenty-four hours

expired during which he was to marry the principal's eldest daughter. She was such a lovely girl, too, but the old *maître d'école* was not out for family scandals, and packed her off to a convent at Tangiers, whence she returned in a few years with a couple of little black-and-tan grandchildren for him at foot.

By the way, dear, I had a long and anxious letter yesterday from Muriel Redgrave, soliciting my "candid opinion" as to the permanent benefits, or otherwise of massage. Her elderly grandfather, it appears, is a perfect martyr to lumbago, and quite lately he consulted a ten-guinea specialist in rheumatic affections in Queen Anne Street, who prescribed bi-weekly massage. Strange to relate, as the old gentleman wended his way home through Regent Street, he spied a sandwich man carrying a board on which was advertised a massage establishment in Swallow Street. where "Nurses Tootsie and Elsie, assisted by Sisters Cora, Angelina Maude, and Puss," might be seen between the hours of 10 A.M. and 10 P.M., and the old gentleman went there. Three hours later, the poor old dear was brought home on an ambulance in a half-dazed and utterly prostrate condition, and, after babbling wildly and repeatedly of the "*ex-tra-*

ordinary treatment," and declaring, more or less coherently, that he never would have believed that any London physician would have prescribed such things, he fell into a deep slumber, and has remained in that condition for eight days.

With regard to your query, dear, as to where you can get "The Sailor's Size, by Balfe," I do not know, but I should advise you to apply at the Sailors' Home, which is somewhere down by the West India Dock gates. You do not say precisely what size "The Sailor's Size, by Balfe" may be, but I enquired of one of the coastguardsmen here, and he says that you will find, if you go down there yourself, that "they've got 'em *all* sizes." This, dear, is the best I can do for you.

Now, mind you write, little one, or better still, run down by the Limited Pullman on Sunday!—Your loving cousin

MAUDE.

FEVRIER

THREE GABLES, BOTTOMFARLEY,
THURSDAY.

MY DEAR LITTLE COUSIN,—

I can quite imagine your surprise on catching sight of the postmark on the envelope enclosing this; we were literally spirited away into the country at a moment's notice, and are spending a few days—which heaven grant may not extend to weeks!—with the hospitable, though distinctly unsophisticated, Merridews. Not that the country-side is at all interesting just now, and travelling at this season I positively abhor—raw, dark mornings, breakfast by gaslight, and the rumbling drive to the station in a four-wheeler smelling as though a successful smoking concert had been held in it by the cabman and his stable associates overnight. Eugh! But it had to be endured. At the time of taking my pretty flat in Mount Street, I must tell you, the house-agent assured

■

me that we should have hot and cold water in every room; but I need hardly add that I did not for an instant take this to mean only when the pipes burst. Nevertheless, he now has the effrontery to contend that his words were open to this construction, though he admits it with remorse; but as Charlie pointed out to him, standing in the pool in the drawing-room with his fishing boots on, there were already several hundred gallons more remorse in the place than we could possibly use. Nobody would believe, nor could I overstate, the annoyance I have suffered over the water at that flat. One huge cistern, you see, has to supply, as well as the residents, the stables in the mews at the back, and often and often I have been left high and dry in my bath-tub, in the midst of a most refreshing ablution, because it suddenly occurred to the Duke of Southmolton's stablemen that his lordship's carriage required a cold douche. And to remain there during the repairing of the burst pipes was quite out of the question, since the first plumber's mate who came and instantly proceeded to stick our svelte little kitchener full of queer iron things that looked like instruments of torture left over from the Inquisi-

tion, had all the powerful natural odour of a basket of pups, and he said there were three others coming. He told Charlie it would greatly expedite matters if we could let him have a "coupler-bob" to "eat the sawder-quick;" but as Charlie endeavoured to make him understand the only tools we had in the place were a corkscrew, a pair of nut-crackers and a can-opener, whereupon he went away growling, presumably to fetch this peculiar instrument. I wonder if in all your travels, Madge, *you* ever heard of a "coupler-bob?"

But gaining knowledge by personal observation never was your strong point, was it, dear? I could not help thinking, as I read your sweetly ingenuous letter over for the second time, that when Providence was distributing Acuteness your name was not called out. Now, my dear child, *do* you for one moment seriously suppose that the great Sara has added Dr Caissarato, the beauty, specialist, to her retinue with the sole idea of his curing, by course of post, unknown lady correspondents suffering from all the ailments known to medical science, ranging between too early buxomising and the Lazarus difficulty? She may show an absolute indifference to expense where her own personal

beauty is at stake—(I daresay you remember how she sent for Mr Clarkson to go out all the way to Naples just because she had ventured so close to the crater of Vesuvius that one of her curls had been singed off?)—but “the drinks are on me,” as the men say, if she is scattering her *louis d’or* around for the general feminine weal. Now *do* you imagine, Madge, that if every poor but deserving girl for whom a tough finish has been confidently predicted could drop a letter-card to the doctor and get a complexion like the heart of a June rose at the first rattle out of the box, Monsieur Caissarato would have any time left to devote to filling out Madame’s wrinkles till his work almost came under the head of taxidermy, or to massaging her nether limbs till they seemed as round and as plump as a brace of the irrepressible Mr Billie Harris’s world-famed three-ounce pea-fed skin-tights, which one sees frying in the restaurant windows?

Come off! It is what you complain of when taking equestrian exercise, I think, that indicates most plainly the real cause of your trouble; your inability, when bumping the saddle, to grunt at the same time as the horse does proves that you are making flesh too rapidly. Plenty of

exercise, both physical and mental, would be better for you than massage, though even exercise in excess will make a woman all knees and elbows. Nevertheless there is not enough bodily exertion in the *régime* of the Harley Street faddist who told you that travelling on a railway, the roadbed of which was made up with the head toward the engine, would do all that was needed. It *may* be all right, but it leaves too much for the imagination to accomplish, as the conscientious gentleman observed in his sleeve after being advised by the Father Confessor to make his lawful wife leave off her wedding-ring whenever he wanted a little excitement. I would suggest that you begin with—say waltzing and tree-climbing. A pure, and at the same time wiry, young man, who for a small consideration would swing you round for two or three hours each evening might be found by a three-and-sixpenny advertisement in the *Morning Post*, and quite possibly he might know of a secluded plantation, with some twenty-five to thirty-five feet high elm or sour-wood trees, in a locality which was not much frequented. Whilst engaged in these pursuits, you might pleasantly combine the mental with the physical by thinking out cryptograms or designing wall-paper.

How sorry, I am sure, you will be to hear that Fanny is far from comfortable in her new house in South Belgravia. Fascinated by the nicely-sounding address, she took the place in much too great a hurry, and it now transpires that its previous occupants were the most awful people, and were only got rid of by being forcibly cleared out by the vestry, backed up by the police and reinforced by the fire brigade from the local stations. At all hours of the day and night Fanny says, men, generally more or less intoxicated, drive up in hansoms, and ask for persons by their Christian names, such as "Effie," and "Addie," and "Rosie"—and by the number of "Rosie's" friends she seems to have been well-known and popular enough to have carried the single men's vote for the Borough Council, had she wanted to—and as Fanny's housemaid persists, despite all Fanny's attempts at teaching, in showing *every one* into the morning-room, poor Fanny constantly has to face the most trying situations. Only on Monday last one of these callers sent the housemaid upstairs to inquire for "the Crazy Countess"—said he "didn't know her by any other name, and didn't want to"—and then, placing his cane in one of Fanny's beautiful Dresden flower pitchers on the

sideboard, and balancing his hat on one of the incandescent globes over the fireplace, he opened the piano and began to roar out a perfectly dreadful song, with a refrain that sounded like "Rumpsy-bumpsy-rollicky-oh!"; whilst on Wednesday night—or, more properly, early on Thursday morning—the front door was nearly hammered in by five young fellows in evening dress, who had driven up in one hansom, and when Fanny answered them from her bedroom window they cried out that it was "all right," that they were "Bob and Bert and Charlie back from the front," and they had brought "a dozen of Boy from the Continental and a game pie twice as big as London." If it were not for this terrible drawback Fanny would give a pleasant little house-warming—indeed she had made all her arrangements for it, even to the extent of borrowing extra glass and china—but she is positively afraid to open the piano for fear of attracting any more of "Rosie's" friends, who may have forgotten the number of the house, and who are frequently seen cruising about the street in cabs, and "trying" houses here and there at hazard.

Yesterday, there being too much frost to hunt, Mrs Merridew and I paid "Robin visits" to

the poor in their cottages, and I was very much impressed in particular by the fortitude and resignation of one old Darby and Joan, who had thoughtfully despatched their three daughters—the three prettiest girls in the whole village, Mrs Merridew said—to seek their fortunes in London, whilst they remained by the log fire-side and philosophically smoked two little clay pipes, and awaited remittances. Their patient wisdom, added to their staunch refusal to go out hop-picking or into the poorhouse, afforded convincing proofs of their being distinctly above the insipid average of contemporaneous rustic intellect, I thought. They had already heard from the eldest and the youngest of the girls, too. The one, who wrote on the grey-headed notepaper of the Carlton, said she knew they would be delighted to hear that she had struck a cheap place for afternoon tea; but had not yet succeeded in obtaining regular employment, though she diligently answered all the advertisements daily. Nevertheless, she enclosed them two sovereigns, which she picked up in the Strand, she said; whilst the other, who had been fortunate enough to drop into an immediate engagement as a “classifier and assorter of new odours” at a big perfumer’s in Bond Street,

wrote to say that she was temporarily suspended from duty on account of a slight polypus in the nose, and was recruiting at Brighton; but she sent "dear old daddy a fiver" out of her first week's salary, and a dear little hall-marked spittoon from Thornhill's. Is it not a pretty picture? Filial love among people of moderate means is always an agreeable sight, I think; but unhappily this picture has a reverse side. A son also had been sent up to London with what few pounds the old people could scrape together, but he was so manifestly unfit to have the care of cash that he had lent it to a gentleman he met at the Criterion to start a livery stable in Venice with, a sickening piece of folly which he had followed up by marrying a young woman, whom almost anybody who takes in *The Queen* or *The Gentlewoman* could instantly recognise as the Tight Fit Corset Company's model. Old Joan's hair turned white in a single hour, they say, after going to the cottage door one night to let in a prodigal family of seven—two grown people and five small children under the age of six, the youngest of whom had only joined the party shortly after the beginning of the long tramp from the metropolis. Beyond imparting an appearance of legitimacy to the

five small children, the young man did not seem to cut any figure, and the conviction influencing the mature minds of the old folks with regard to him to-day is chiefly relative to the unfortunate-ness of his sex, and might be expressed in a few words, which, though plain and simple do not admit of reproduction. Of course it is deadly dull down here; still if it be true that men can easily overlook a plain face if only it be accompanied by a symmetrical limb, I know of no foreign bathing resort that offers greater facilities to the well-developed girl than this Hampshire of ours in February, with its brave ploughed fields, its magnificently muddy lanes, and its apparently quite unnegotiable stiles. A well-cut tan boot, surmounted by a nicely filled article of lisle thread and silk, either all one colour or with vertical stripes, can scarcely fail to turn the head of anything able to raise whiskers, from the host himself down to the most casual guest, and, interest once secured, a pretty contrast and fresh food for speculation may be supplied by changing into a fine black transparent lisle, with lace fronts, for evening wear.

And now, dear, with regard to your going to your first Dramatic Ball. It is only natural that you should "feel bound to support theatrical

charities," since you were born at a benefit matinee — something caused the "sunlight" to fall from the centre of the roof into the crowded pit, and your lamented mamma was not prepared for shocks, so the story goes—and I know of none more deserving than this. Its foundation is due, I have been told, to Miss Nellie Causton pointing out to the Lord Chamberlain that if the stars of the theatrical firmament could only be induced (by closing the theatres) to celebrate Ash Wednesday in a proper manner, it would make the austerity and sobriety of the rest of Lent a matter of absolute necessity; and so thoroughly do her male patrons seem to have entered into the devotional spirit which actuated her, that, to judge from the thirst they bring with them, they must eat about a couple of tons of salt fish apiece on Shrove Tuesday.

But in the matter of making your own frock I scarcely know how to advise you, as none of the things which you say you have by you—the soiled canary silk lamp-shade, the purple brocade robe which your aunt bought two years ago at Oberammergau of Pontius Pilate, and the nipped tucks of batiste which have not yet come home from the laundry—can be said to serve the purpose extremely well. I should think your

sister Blanche might lend you her washing silk : surely if she has cyanosis as badly as you say she must be growing rather weary of pale blue tints, especially as it is a shade which will not, as she seems to suppose, "take" the twine tone which alone would make it a pretty contrast for her own wear. As a *débutante* you must certainly carry a bouquet of some sort, though flowers wither so very quickly at a ball—especially a Dramatic Ball. An excellent idea, and one that finds much favour with drawing-room belles, is to start with two or three simple pink rosebuds, the stems of which are deftly inserted into the neck of a small, long glass bottle, two-thirds filled with rain water, and secreted in the centre of the bosom, beneath the corset. A well-developed girl—and I may at once say that this need not be attempted by those who have fronts which only call up visions of Saul's dream of the seven years of famine—should experience no difficulty in concealing a bottle of the size generally known as a "split soda" ; then, as the night proceeds, and the water in the dainty improvised hot-house becomes tropical, the buds go off one by one with a surprised little "pop!" and unfold into glorious and exquisitely fresh roses. But be careful that the bottle does not become reversed. *Apropos* of low necks, I shall

not soon forget, dear, the agonised little yell of a beautiful dineress here who carelessly allowed a little gob of her *sorbet au kirsch* to slip off her spoon and wiggle down the interior of her much-admired corsage, the other evening. Like all things that are extremely cold, the icy *sorbet* is "a devil to nestle," as Charlie would say, and the way the fair sufferer brought her elbows and her pretty alabaster shoulders forward with a sudden jerk and a muttered "Christophe Colomb!" reminded one of a poor Mongolian at the moment of his being coarsely bayoneted below the belt. Hats, dear, are to be larger than ever, whilst the best-cut skirts are tighter round the top and much fuller round the bottom—which may sound like a paradox to a mere man, but which *you* will understand quite perfectly, I feel sure.

Whether you wilfully avoided clarity when enquiring for the source of several little sets of rhymes the other day, of course I do not know, but *please*, Madge, do not again say that *I* suggested that you would probably come across the nursery poem about little Cain waking up in the night and addressing certain childish observations to Adam, winding up with—

"So if it's all the same to Ma,
Make me a rocking-horse, please Pa."

—in Mr Andrew Lang's "Blue Poetry Book," because I most emphatically did nothing of the kind. As a matter of fact I have never even seen the book.—Your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

MARS

MOUNT STREET MANSIONS,
WEDNESDAY.

SWEET COUSIN,—

Do you ever, I wonder, when you glance over the “Agony Column” of the evening newspaper, pause to consider whether you know, or are known to any of the queer creatures who carry on the agonised correspondences which appear in that column at tenpence per line? I must confess that I do, and when, three or four months ago, I encountered the following in the “*Special Standard*”—

IF THE TALL, dark gentleman in the Colorado-claro, coloured billycock who was smoking a Roman cigar with a straw spinal column in the Café Monico on Tuesday night would like to communicate with the blonde young lady whose escort wanted to fight the waiter over the smell of the Limburger, he may do so by making an appointment with FANNIE B., care of Jelly’s Library, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.

I had a strange presentiment that it emanated from Fannie Bruce, the tall girl that used to

come to the Continental, and who claimed to be a direct descendant of the Scottish King who used to drink till he saw spiders. And yesterday's proceedings in the Divorce Court proved my guess to be perfectly correct: in the suit of *Biffer v. Biffer and Bilkins*, Fannie was the respondent, the "tall dark gentleman of the Colorado-claro billycock" was Mr Bilkins, the co-respondent, and poor old Biffer, the fighter of waiters, the elderly masher who happened to be a patient at the nursing home where Fannie "trained," and who was nourished and fostered back to health by her after he had been nearly cut to ribbons by Saffron Hill Italians for following one of their young women back from midnight mass—the surgeons put no less than seventeen stitches in his poor rennet alone, Fannie once told me—was the typically vindictive petitioner. He appears to have been a little more wideawake than Fannie thought him, and he went into the witness-box and 'conducted his own case with some ability, I thought—and a couple of old maids who sat giggling in the front row of the gallery evidently thought so too. By the way, dear, could there be any better type of the height of incongruity than an old maid taking a devouring interest in

the proceedings of a Divorce Court? Really some old maids are past all bearing, as Dr Bull observes somewhere in one of his justly famous works.

The attachment between the respondent and himself, the petitioner deposed, sprang up in the nursing establishment in Wimbeck Street, where the respondent came to his room every night, took his temperature and his cigarroots, advised him to "buck up," left him a humorous book called "Salad for the Solitary," and went away. At first he entertained only a feeling of gratitude towards her, but this ripened into deep affection on the night when he had been eating "seedy-cake" in the bed, and she volunteered to clear out the crumbs and make him "comfy." (Laughter, which was instantly suppressed). On his leaving the hospital he lost sight of respondent for fully two months, and he next ran across her quite accidentally at Victoria Station, when she rushed him for a bottle of Pommery, a turquoise bracelet, a two-guinea pair of boots, and a half-sovereign "ready" before he'd even asked her where she was living. (Renewed laughter. His lordship said that if the unseemly disturbance was repeated he should order the gallery to be cleared. It was a court of justice, not a theatre.)

Petitioner, continuing, said that on the following morning he purchased a special licence, and, on the day after that, they were married by a Registrar, he, the petitioner, being under the impression that the respondent's abominable unattractiveness would keep her involuntarily faithful. For a short time they were supremely happy, in fact, said the petitioner, "No man in that court was fonder of his wife than he was." (Loud and prolonged cheering, during which his lordship directed the officials to clear the gallery.) Silence being restored, the petitioner said his suspicions with regard to the respondent were first aroused on the night of their visiting Brighton, when, he not knowing how to switch off the electric lights in their bedroom, she, with great alacrity, proceeded to show him. His thoughts on that matter kept him awake all night, and from that time he began to observe his wife somewhat closely. He discovered that she had a remarkably fine figure, though he subsequently ascertained that this discovery was shared by others.

His lordship, interposing, asked what was the date of this discovery.

The petitioner regretted that he had not kept a note of the date, but his attention was shortly

afterwards drawn to the "Tall dark gentleman" advertisement, and to others in the same column of the same newspaper, which he would now submit to his lordship. They were as follows:—

NOSER'S DETECTIVES.—Great Success in 'Divorce. Courts crowded. Co-respondents in attendance Day and Night.

NOSER'S DETECTIVES.—Decrees Nisi a speciality. Try our Judicial Separations, with or without Alimony.

NOSER'S DETECTIVES for getting at the bed-rock of marital infidelities. Was he sitting up, as he said, with a sick friend? Did madame spend the whole afternoon on the slab in the Turkish? Detectives disguised as hospital nurses; lady detectives in bath towels. —Telegraphic address, "Doggoh, London."

Acting on the information obtained by this firm, petitioner said, he instituted the present proceedings. The respondent then entered the witness-box, and was cross-examined by the petitioner.

Her age, she said, was twenty-five and not fifty-two, as stated by the petitioner. She had been twice secretly married, though she did not think it necessary to disclose the fact at the time of meeting the petitioner. Her first husband was "doing seven years, and it ought to have been seventy." Her second was out in Texas some-

where, and had not been heard from for some time. In his last letter he asked that by-gones might be by-gones, and that she would take him back, but she did not feel that she could receive him since he had, by his own admission, been recently tarred and feathered. She had always been under the impression that a wife, when deserted, had the right to re-marry as often as she pleased. She had never considered "Salad for the Solitary" an improper book to place in the hands of a patient suffering from a lacerated rennet, nor did she remember such a passage in it as:

"In the astonishment and rapture of Morna's confession of love for him, Hildebrand so far forgot the discrepancy between the property of his steward and himself as to lean forward and imprint a hot kiss upon the back of her swanlike neck. Morna, on her part, was utterly overcome, and fell to the ground in a swoon. And so the long day wore on."

Continuing, the respondent said she had never played at "weighing butter" and did not know that any such game existed. The fragment of torn letter produced was in her handwriting; she generally wrote to her friends in cryptograms, but could not say to whom this one had been addressed. It was then translated and read:—

' 3cc .	—“ all
K89j	this
9	I
1flc4 and 83m5	could have
fm5icffb54	overlooked
2lk	but
6fi	for
K85 and 6 ffe	the fool
fi45i9e7	ordering
Jg9e7 and fe9fej	Spring onions
9e	in
K85 and j3c34;	the salad ;
feep and 63e1p	only fancy,
453i,	dear,
53K9e7	eating
fe9fe-j3c34j	onion salads
fe-and-3	on a
8fe5pdffe!	honeymoon!

63ee95

FANNIE."

The co-respondent then went into the box and was cross-examined. He had never been within one mile of the Café Monico in his life, he said, and did not even know where it was. On the date on which the petitioner charged him with meeting the respondent he happened, as the doctor's certificate, which had been filed, would show, to be undergoing inoculation for tuberculosis, from the effects of which he collapsed and died on the following Sunday, on which day he was also tried, sentenced, and guillotined for a

murder in the Rue Morgue, in Paris, which he never committed, and he was further prepared to put into the box three independent witnesses who got him out of the top of a tree on Plumstead Marshes, and could swear that he was trying flying-machines all day with Mr Maxim, whilst, at the very hour in the evening fixed by the petitioner, he was, he regretted to say, being scaiped and disembowelled in a side-show at the Earl's Court Exhibition for rubbing noses with, and so introducing epithelioma into, the Red Dog Tribe of Indians.

So mean and contemptible a defence is, happily, I think, seldom heard, but when the craven wretch (who really would have flown the country, I am told, on being served with the citation, but that he was too agitated to pack his trunk) began to plead alternative defences, including Infancy, the Gaming Act, connivance on the part of the petitioner, Trover, also that he did not know the respondent was a married woman," and the Statute of Limitations, poor Fannie was so mortified that great salt tears of indignation stood in her "big, brown, bedroom eyes"—as Byron says, somewhere—and she sobbed something about being dash-blanked if she wouldn't almost sooner have been charged with simple desertion,

like some poor soppy, ungingered school-girl than have come before the courts with such a "Co." I cannot truthfully say that I was greatly disappointed on going back after the luncheon interval to find that the court was full and that we could not get in, but the subsequent non-suiting of the petitioner—which, I must tell you, little one, means that the horrid old judge has slapped the harness on them again, unless they can stir up a legal fossil called the King's Proctor and induce him to get the Act repealed, or declared ungrammatical, or something—will be a sad thing for Fannie, with her other opportunities. Still, while she fraternises with such horned cattle as the Monico masher, she is denied the right to bellow when gored. Silly? Why, as the immortal Sally Slapcabbage once remarked: "I'd as soon think of travelling alone in a first-class carriage on the Underground with a clergyman, that I would!"

You can scarcely realise, dear, what an intense relief it was to get away from the mausolean odour and oppressiveness of those awful courts, and, with the lamps lit and one's corset removed, to sit over a glowing fire of Baltic billets, and compare the sordid procedure of the Strand with the far pleasanter Confucian forms in vogue in

Yokohama, and Kobe, and in Tokio. For, as dear old Sir Edwin tells us in "All *Mi-Ai* and Afterwards," even in that fair land of tea-shops and all-day tutti-frutti, duplicity not infrequently raises its hideous head, and the rattle of the handful of gravel on the window-pane is not entirely unknown—indeed he is good enough to give us a literal translation of the three brief, but significant letters which constituted the whole of the "exhibits" in the undefended and untried suit of Kamekichi *versus* Kamekichi and Sokichi-Yamamoto, which tell their own story, I think, eloquently enough. The proceedings were opened by the aggrieved husband, with this:—

"TO SOKICHI-YAMAMOTO,

"Greeting,

"This is to tell you, Sokichi, that it is discovered to me that you have sinned more gravely than he who crosseth a rectangular field diagonally, or he that passeth behind a sleeping cat; you have been guilty of improperly loving my wife, Tsune Azumamura Kamekichi, without asking me first—although I am told you have referred to me freely enough, when, later in the evening, you were describing the proceedings to your asylum acquaintances. It is a business which has caused me several keen intestinal pangs, Sokichi, but please to understand that right here is where it is all going to stop. Unless I receive from you before lighting-up time—sunset is arranged for 6.37 P.M.—fourteen millions of yens* in

* At the present rate of exchange, about thirteen and tenpence.

a green silk sack, I propose to forward Tsune, together with a duly-executed deed of transfer, to you, as per VII and VIII Mik, *cap* 33, 35, and 37, down to the bottom. For, think you, Sokichi, I shall stand meekly by in sheeply dumbness, like a mutton before the shearer, while you monkey with my lily-of-the-valley, my star-of-the-garden? Think you, Sokichi-Yamamoto (for I observe that you have incurred the hyphen) that I shall tolerate you to sip the sweetness of my heavenly pomegranate while I die a lingering death of thirst on the tow-path? Not on your tintype, Sokichi, not on your little tintype!

“ Thine

“ FUJIKAWA KAMEKICHI, J.C.C.” *

As it is not necessary for the married Jap who has got a “lead pipe cinch” on his erring mate to appeal to any tribunal whatsoever, the guilty co-respondent who finds such a letter as the foregoing in his morning mail, either makes arrangements to have the writer of it privately poisoned during the next ten hours, or resignedly accepts the situation, merely telling the mistress of his boarding-house to put another pillow on his bolster as a laidifriend of his is about to “come to stay,” as the editor says of the new snide monthly; but Sokichi tried for a middle course, and wrote:—

“ To FUJIKAWA KAMEKICHI, Esq., J.C.C., etc.

“ Grovelling,

“ The miserable house servant who brings you this writing

* Japan County Council, clearly.

and tarries until you kindly say what shall my future be—whether I do remain here and become your footstool or whether I do efface myself from this pleasant island and tour in China as far as my vital organs hold out—shall moreover tell you that I am more ashamed over that which I have did than is the farmyard female fowl of feminine gender who has foregone her appointments, etc., in order to sit for six weeks on the profitless tin dog of the farmer's small child. But the thing is indisputably true, and I live only on the desperate chance of awakening in your large heart some stray glint of merciful forgiveness. Alas! the fourteen millions of yens I have not—may yellow dogs defile my progenitor's grave if I have! or, better still, you can search me—though heaven knows I have hustled. Immediately on receipt of your favour, I wired Cork Street and paid reply, but presumably the names were not good enough; all the same, I do not deserve nor desire to acquire sole rights in Tsune, your lily-of-the-valley, the star-of-your-little-garden-with-a-gait-on. Forgive her, forgive us both, Fuj, old man; no evil will endure a hundred years.

“Sorrowfully thine,

“SOKICHI YAMAMOTO.”

But old man Kamekichi never could eat hot buns at tea-time; the small, simple dish of Pekoe was all he asked, so back to Sokichi-Yamamoto came the following:—

“To SOKICHI-hyphen-YAMAMOTO,

“Notakingany.

“Yours of even date lies before me, in more senses than one. I should like to have, at your convenience, the address of the apothecary's where you get your nerve tonic, but the rest of your prospectus is too attenuated to stand starch. Re Tsune Azumamura Kamekichi : I regret your inability to con-

nect with Cork Street, and you will probably regret it yourself before—

‘ The frost is on the pum’kin
An’ the fodder’s in the shock.’

—but that is *your* little piece of pigeon, Sokichi, all your own, yours entirely. Meantime I beg to enclose your duly-executed transfer-note, bill of lading, inventory, and all other proprietary scrip in her, and the carman bringing this will hand you Tsune herself, on whom all transmission charges are prepaid. Please sign Forwarding Co.’s delivery-sheet in the space opposite number thirteen and oblige,

“ Yours in tall glasses,
“ F. K.”

And that is how Mrs Fujikawa became Mrs Sokichi-Yamamoto, without scandal or paying the difference, and when the correspondence was in due course laid before the great Mikado, who is himself the topmost blossom on the highest branch of the ever-blooming shrub of exotic courtesy, he smiled so approvingly that the proper functionary of the Imperial household instantly promulgated an iman, or an irade, or whatever it is, calling for three cheers and a tiger throughout the flowery empire.

It is very sweet indeed of you, to give me the opportunity of joining your Boat Race party, and I have everything necessary to such an outing by me—including the very latest thing

from Rosedale's, dear, a positively delightful little marine glass, which unscrews for sherry and curaçoa, and holds over a pint and a half! —but poor Charlie is in a great tangle over drawing up a prospectus, and I have promised to stay at home on Saturday and assist him. In the early days of the automobile craze he brought out, I must tell you, a horseless horse-radish, made of desiccated potatoes and aquafortis, and put up in shilling jars, but, poor fellow! he had not the unlimited cash that is needed nowadays in pure food advertising, and, as the last jar of the horse-radish we opened had an aroma that was more like a Saturday-to-Monday in Constantinople than anything else, the huge quantity of the stuff stored in the stables in Davies Street will turn out a clear loss unless we can put it on the market as a corn eradicator, or a hair-restorer, or a new corpulency cure. Charlie is distinctly in favour of the latter, as stout persons, he says, are less quarrelsome when deceived than slim ones, whilst the price at which the remedy will be offered to the public will place it beyond the reach of the needy, who are apt to be resentful if not cured with one bottle. So Charlie is not without resource, you see, although, like many old public

schoolboys, he cannot spell even a little bit—certainly not well enough to draw up a circular of directions and testimonials, for instance, “dizzezez,” for “diseases” would scarcely pass muster even amongst persons who read all medical advertising matter hurriedly. The “directions for use,” by the way, I have already drawn up with that delightful ambiguity which is the sheet-anchor of most proprietary medicines. They are:—

DIRECTIONS : *Fill bath, or bath-tub, two-thirds full of the remedy; then get in gently and order favourite books and newspapers; also meals to be brought regularly. Continue till satisfied.*

—THE INVENTOR.

Charlie declares he is delighted, and can already see us making monkeys of some of the present advertising impostors; as soon as this happens, dear, I will be re-photographed with a tiara of diamonds over my front hair and waved at the sides.—Your's for shifting the white man's burden,

MAUDE.

AVRIL

THE HUTCH, DULLINGHAM,
NEAR NEWMARKET,
MONDAY EVENING.

DEAREST LITTLE MADGE,—

Whenever I come down here for the racing I generally leave my correspondence severely behind me, but your apparent despondency inclines me to waive my rule. You really have no good reason that *I* can discover to “reproach yourself” over the loss of your “Lady Day boy,” as you term your ex-mash, but of course there is no constitutional rule to prevent your doing so. A little reproach in the spring of the year does one good, I think, if one does not take cold after it. But be sure that you get Dr Rumble’s Reproach Drops—at any of the Haymarket chemists—and I should think you could do with a No. 19. Somehow, dear, I never quite cottoned to your “Lady Day boy,” and I have therefore no regrets to express at

the probability of my never meeting him again. He was no thoroughbred, as I whispered to you that night at Romano's when he marched round the waiter's wagon with the soup tureen on his head and a stick of celery, from the next people's table, in his hand, under the impression that he was a trooper in the Blues on guard at Whitehall; and when you tell me that, at the Café Royal the other night, he calmly proceeded, when the fish was served, to eat the buttered paper which enclosed the red mullet, well—that's where he "made an egregious of himself," as the talented historian says of Charles the First. If the truth could only be ascertained, I wonder what he *really* was, Madge.

Do you remember the Honourable Paul Northbank once admitting that when he was hard up he used to tell the "dear little souls" that he was a gentleman's valet, as apart from this accounting for his nicely cut clothes, it was in many ways more convenient and agreeable to seem quite a decent sort of servant than a comparatively impecunious swell? Still, even a gentleman's servant would know better than to eat buttered paper. It is always in some *small* matter, some scarcely perceptible detail, that the man who is not strictly of *le haut ton*

puts the crape bank on his aspirations. He is certain to display the one touch of vulgar impulsion, the momentary want of repose, by which even a well-trained servant can distinguish the true peacock from the jackdaw with the hand-painted tail. And this leads me to speak of a certain friend of Lena Hutchinson's, a Mr Wilkinson Fitch, who, though already married, I believe, to some highly cultured and doubtless 'delightfully intellectual creature, only really *lives* on the one or two evenings in the month in which he contrives to dine quietly with Lena in a private room at Juniori's. Talk about your problem plays, Madge! why, if the crimson flock and gold-stamped paper on the walls of the pokey little private rooms at Juniori's, which look out upon the squalors of Soho, could only speak, they would put forward more knotted social cat's cradles in one night than the whole army of dramatists and playwrights could invent in a month of Sundays! Poor human nature! Why was a weak, vacillating duffer like Adam, with his miserable little two-ounce bottle of ineffectual serpent antidote, entrusted with the manorial rights of such a place as Eden? Surely St Patrick was the man that was wanted, not Adam?

Anyway, Lena (whose life is colourless and monotonous enough at home) and this Mr Fitch simply *exist* for the sake of these bi-weekly gatherings; and on this particular evening of which she was telling me, her truant lover probably thought she looked more seductively beautiful than ever. The ruby tints that Juniori's blood-red lampshades threw upon Lena's cheeks and neck must have made her perfectly irresistible; and when the waiter came up to take away the soup-plates, he found the badly-hit Fitch's *consommé* positively untasted. But a private-room waiter is selected mainly for his discretion, and Alphonse, without remark, substituted the fish for the soup, and closed the door noiselessly behind him. Never was a *filet sole* served better; no finer bottle of '74 *Chablis Moutonne* ever came to table, but Wilkinson had eyes and appetite only for Lena. He plied her with the glorious wine—nor did he forget his own glass—and felt himself the most fortunate fellow in the world. Finally, his feelings got the better of him, and, rising from the table, and upsetting his chair as he did so, he drew Lena from her seat, flung his strong arms around her and covered her with kisses—hot, passionate kisses that he could hold not an instant longer.

It was a feast of love, such as only a poet of passion could properly write up, but——

Just at that instant the door opened, almost without emitting a sound, and there stood Alphonse with an expression of unbounded surprise and *the Côtelettes de Ris de Veau, pointes d'Asperges!*

Of course, it was a perfectly *awful* situation for Lena, who can never possibly go to Juniori's again, and Mr Fitch was scarcely less disconcerted. But dignity had to be maintained at all cost, and, as nothing but a particularly steep bluff could restore it, Mr Fitch glared at the waiter and demanded :

"At what are you gaping, *misérable*? Have you never witnessed anything of this sort before?"

"Oh yais, many *many* times, sare," replied the epicurean waiter, "but——" and here he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, as though he, as well as the matchless cuisine, had received a personal affront——"but nevair yet *beta-ween ze poisson and ze entrée*, nevair!"

This wretched insinuation—that they were mere silly *sans culottes*, or bank-holidayites on the razzle-dazzle, rather than members of the smart set in unusually exuberant spirits—was far

more humiliating, Lena said, than the *contre-temps* itself.

So you are subpoenaed as a witness in a divorce case, are you? Well, dear, one can always derive amusement and profit, I think, by listening to the ingenious, not to say the ingenuous, stories unfolded in the Palais de Justice that stands in the dear old Strand. And then, too, the pure novelty of the thing is a delight in itself, as the young bride remarked when the new bridegroom elected to honeymoon at Rome instead of the Métropole at Brighton. To you, who are a sweet, bright girl (though your parents, I have been told, wished for a boy), there could not fail to be a great store of rich mental refreshment in the artless tale of the co-respondent, who seeks to impress the jury with the idea that he lacks about a year of knowing anything; in the fresh, frank, righteous indignation of the petitioner, who tells how he has twice ballasted the unsophisticated co-respondent aforesaid with bird shot; and in the demure protests of the beautiful respondent herself, who, according to her own version, has been so absolutely straight during her brief married life, that she has barely kept out of the local asylum for idiots. Only a little while ago I heard a case tried there in

which the "Co." was no Joseph, but a florid gentleman, with a bald head and a beetling stomach, who, it appeared, went down to pay a dine-and-sleep visit in the country, and was by the charming respondent pressed so hard to remain that the creases still remained in the suit of clothing he was then wearing, and he tendered them as evidence. For some inscrutable reason, by the way, the story of a woman's backsliding is always pointed by a stern moral and a pair of trousers. Then the fair, but doubtless frail, respondent entered the box, and "went" red-handed for her whilom partner. She first denied *in toto* the allegations he had made against her, and then pleaded, in the alternative, that if she had ever shown any partiality to superfluous and unlawful males it was a sort of contagious disorder which she had inherited from the petitioner's mother. To give fuller effect to this pretty defence, she took care never to mention the old lady's name without reaching for her *Eau de Cologne* bottle and carefully spraying herself. But she had a dense, unsentimental jury to deal with, and an equally unimpressionable judge, so that the petitioner got his *decree nisi*, also judgment against the co-respondent for £40,000, with which, I am told, he intends to

retire to a large residential limekiln on the banks of the Rhine as soon as he can collect it—the money, of course, not the limekiln.

In another suit—a wife's petition this time—the respondent awoke in the middle of the night to find that he was alone. Just then, hearing a noise in the hall below, and not knowing, he said, that his wife had gone down with the key of the tantalus, he advanced to the head of the stairs and fired two charges of buckshot at the white-robed figure below. Upon investigation he found that he had missed the petitioner but had fatally wounded a prize fox-terrier worth quite twenty pounds, and put out the left eye of a terra-cotta bust of Dr Joseph Parker, which, as it came out in evidence, the co-respondent had long used as a hat-stand. But a truce to other women's troubles; broken hearts have often been tinkered and repaired till they proved to be in better trim than they were in the beginning.

Have I ever, I wonder, spoken to you of my deep and implacable belief in fortune-telling? I daresay, dear, you have yourself encountered many, many social and domestic problems far too complicated and involved for any sort of human casuistry—mysteries indeed that could only be unravelled by cutting the cards? Now, over the

dinner-table last night, somebody happened to mention the fact that a tribe of gipsies had pitched upon some waste land on the road to Cambridge, so, this afternoon, I and dear Lady Mabel Mountsheraton—who is in great distress of mind at being unable, after riding all her husband's horses to a standstill, to form an acquaintance with any young sporting nobleman who will mount her *pour le bon motif*. I may add that she has persistently begged M. to let her go to South or to Dollar and buy even a moderate hack, but he has told her, rather curtly, she may go to Helfurst, and, though we have looked in all the directories, we cannot find a dealer of that name.—I wonder if *you* may be able to give us his address? probably he is a German—drove over in the dog-cart, by way of Six Mile Bottom, to find them. And what Mother Lee, a quaint old mummy of a creature, with feet that constantly robbed each other of the right of way, and a costume representing a hand-to-hand contest to a finish between the primary colours, told us, for half-a-sovereign apiece, was simply marvellous! Let those who rail at superstition and scoff at all phenomena produced by supernatural agency do so, dear, but believe me, every word that this venerable sorceress of Six Mile Bottom told us

was as true as—I was about to write “gospel,” but feeling that, after all, the simile is not very convincing, I will substitute as true as that all girls are born with—say, noses; a fact, I feel sure, the most captious will not dispute.

Don’t imagine, dear, that I am going to fill my letter with one half that she said of *me*. Indeed, if I did so you would only exclaim, “But this is not mere palmistry; this is *It!*” And, truly, it was. First asking me not to be offended if she spoke too candidly, she told me that I was of slightly erotic temperament, but of great intellectual strength, by which any morbid activity was successfully checked. I was impulsive, generous, forgiving, tactful, shapely, sanitary, wholly unselfish, and should “pull through if I only kept my fly-trap shut”—those, dear, were her own crude, unvarnished words. There was a “spade” man who meant me no good; still he could plot no wrong to me so long as I never missed my last ’bus and continued to use paraffin for my hair. Mabel’s forecast was, upon the whole, not so cheering. No less than seven men were entangled in her life, and one of them would shortly sleep in an imposing building with turrets to it. Mabel had just previously told me—even as we waited

for the old gipsy—that an old friend who had been very, *very* good to her was daily expecting to be taken to Holloway by her inexorable modiste, although the horrid thing had had hundreds and hundreds of pounds, and that some of the prices she had charged were positively *monstrous*. This bad news quite depressed poor Mabel for, as she said, there were so many new things that she wanted quite urgently that she simply *dare* not ask M. for. Before we came away, however, Mother Lee made Mabel a little happier by assuring her that before many moons had waned she would receive a long letter—illustrated—from a “heart” man across the sea; that she would presently be on a slightly better peace-footing with her husband’s relations, and that, ultimately, she would get anything else that was coming to her.

Newmarket is rather dull at night, but it would have been distinctly more so had I not by sheer accident come across a most merry little book, evidently the property of some man, and which had been left behind in the drawer of the wash-stand. It resembles a commonplace birthday book in that it is ruled off into little spaces for people to sign their names in, but the mottoes in those spaces are far more homely and familiar than the stilted quotations from classic authors,

generally met with in this kind of work. Let me offer you a few selections—some of the men's texts and some of the girls'—taken quite at random :

Jany. 13. Piccadilly's always good enough for *me*. Here have I been ten months in the Transvaal getting sunburnt and sober; now I'm going to get pale and putrid again.

E. Roberts-Wegg, Lieut. Impl. Yeoy.

Feby. 22. So King Arthur set out to find the Holy Grail, full of misgiving about Guinevere, and more than half inclined to chuck crusading up. For in those days the ladies of the court had nothing to read, and no healthy girl could be expected to embroider *all* the time.

Daisy De Lorne Carrington.

Mch. 12. The authority you quote for wearing your dress-suit always after six P.M. does not mean to imply that you should do so after retiring.

Hildebrand Hobson, N.C.P.

April 4. Whereat Farmer Chawbacon replied that he didn't know nothing about givin' references, but as to her character for truth and veracity, she ever was a liar from a babby, and as to her veracity, why, some said as she did and some said as she didn't.

Blanche Gwendoline Treadwater.

May 15. I must remind you that the regular settling day over the City and Suburban is long past; I should be sorry if you forced me to post you as a defaulter at Tattersall's.

Ernest W. Burton-Botts, F.I.J.

June 8. Oh, don't let my being a married woman worry you, my pippin—we need never meet *him*. Save when he comes in to dress for dinner he is hardly ever in the house, and *we* are not likely to haunt the Empire.

Lena Delaprè Batterbush.

July 29. Sir Francis said that more shameful conduct than that of the co-respondent had never polluted the annals of that court.

Clement W. Dryfoogle.

Augst. 16. I'm positively sick of diamonds; if you *must* give me something I would rather have some cambric pocket-hankerchiefs or an electro-plated toast-rack.

Duckie de Vere, Gaiety Theatre.

I am sure you will be keenly interested to learn, dear, that poor Charlie has at last a really "big thing" on the *tapis*, nothing less, let me tell you, than a scheme to utilise the now wasted phosphorescent illuminating power that exists in water. The different ways in which water may be used as an illuminant are practically unlimited: it will not be long, Charlie says, before the practical scientist will do everything with water except drink it. My dreams of entertaining royalty may be realised yet!

What recipe shall I send you this month? Would you like to try this preserve of potato peelings? it is an excellent substitute for dearer

jams, etc., whilst any that is left over after all are satisfied may be used in the stables as an infallible veterinary remedy for cracked heels. It is not difficult to make, once the art of controlling the fermentation is mastered :—

Of fresh potato-peelings take as many as would fill a middling-sized cow, and boil down with two quarts of nouilles, a little all-spice, a teaspoonful of Cannabis Indica, and anything else that takes the eye. Boil about four hours. When cool, strain off, flavour to taste, and store. You will readily ascertain if fermentation takes place, as the jars will then explode; in which event scrape up carefully and re-pot.

I advise you to make some, dear; and, at the same time, if your friends know how to hold your head in a bucket of water for a few minutes without being found out, they will save themselves a world of sickness and indigestion.—Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

MAI

MOUNT STREET MANSIONS,
SATURDAY.

MY DEAR LITTLE COUSIN,—

I daresay you have been wondering why you have not had a line from me lately? Do you know, dear, I have been going to write to you over and over again, but—well, please take the will for the deed, as the poor relation said at the Christmas party when the wealthy uncle playfully affixed the mistletoe to the tails of his coat.

To tell you the truth, little one, I have been much worried about poor Charlie, who has been *dreadfully* ill, in which circumstances writing letters and eating carpet-tacks have been both alike to me, as dear Mrs Humphry Ward says. It all came about, dear, through his imprudently patronising a new barber, who, in a zealous endeavour to please a fresh customer, shaved my poor darling so closely that when his sharp,

bristly new beard started it had to grow out of the skin through new holes, and so brought on a very obstinate and painful affection of the cuticle. And, goodness knows, the poor fellow was in trouble enough before this, seeing that the horrid financiers in the City absolutely refused to underwrite his syndicate for bringing out his latest and really most marvellous invention, the "B.-P. Bonnet Pin"—"B.-P.", I should add, on account of its great resourcefulness, for, with it, any lady, young or old, can fasten her hat on, secure a door, pick the kernels out of Brazil or other nuts, hold a burglar or a broken sashline up, start a jibbing horse, secure entomological specimens, tap a dropsical friend, or remove fluff and accumulated cotton abrasions from a sewing-machine. But they wouldn't have it; and I really do begin to think with Charlie that it is easier for the proverbial camel to go through the knee of the idol than to float *anything* in these dull times. In consequence of all this trouble, Madge, you can understand why we have kept but little company, although dear Major Murgatroyd, who scabbarded his tulwar and went into the wine business just before the outbreak of the war, has been staying with us and keeps us well posted in the technicalities of the fighting. He must really be a

heavy loss to the army, for he is evidently a great military engineer, and, given the right kind of stores and ammunition, would cheerfully undertake to fortify Houndsditch against the Hebrews. He himself has said so.

But, despite our early reverses in the Transvaal, the Major is not more incensed against Mr Kruger than he is against the braggart, pro-Boer Duc d'Orleans, whom he would cheerfully fight at any sporting club which would give a reasonable purse and protection from police interference. And what, after all, Madge, can be tougher than to catch an uncrowned Royal head doing a dirty act? What can be more depressing than to find your once favourite Dauphin playing the elementary chump, the pale green jay? Not that there is the least likelihood of Philippe's ever sitting in the imperial gilt chair at Versailles, for, as the Major says, he hasn't got the brains to fill it—plump as he is.

Whom do you suppose I ran up against at the Exhibition the other night? But, there, you would never guess, so I will tell you—Minnie Maddern—that sickeningly affected creature who used to live in the rooms above my old ones in Somerset Street; the girl who wrote to the correspondence editor of *The*

Family Doctor on reading Heine's dictum—"No man reaches his highest mental and moral stature till he has surrendered part of his *ego* to the controlling influence of a woman," to ask him to be good enough to tell what *ego* was the "medico's Latin for!" She was passing as a widow, she told me, because her "boy," who had an incurable mania for big game shooting, left for Nevada last summer to look for a grizzly; and as she hasn't heard of him since August, she has come to the conclusion that the bear saw him first. So, if she be not a widow, perhaps I had better designate her, as dear Arthur Roberts did Edie Merton's sister, when he told her fortune by the cards at the Dramatic Club Ball.

"Now let me see," he observed, as, with brows knit, he began to lay out the pack; "One, two, three—a letter—to the house—you will have a letter—it will contain bad news—ha!—you have a sister—she is a 'diamond' lady—very fair—the bad news will be about her—she will shortly become a widow."

"I—er—I—I ought to mention," stammered Edie, "that she's—er—not exactly *married* to the gentleman with—er—with whom——"

"Quite so. I was about to say she will become

a *widowette* ! ; " and surely, dear, if "novelette " and "pantalette," why not widowette ?

Anyway, Minnie Maddern and her "poor boy's " short spell of married life consisted mainly of a prolonged tussle with the few trustful tradespeople left round High Street, Marylebone, and the only ready money she handled was derived from selling photographic rights of their baby—quite a robust little chap—to proprietors of infants' foods, for reproduction. To hear Minnie crack on about the men who are "dead gone " on her you would really think she was the only bit of cake in the pantry.

Yesterday being "Rejected Sunday," the day on which the hopeful idiot of either gender, who vainly considered that the Royal Academy plums were within the reach of his or her pole, exhibits pictures to admiring friends, Charlie and I looked up the Smudgley-Smears, in Queen's Club Studios; but it was a depressing experience. The poor, insipid creatures lead vapid, colourless existences, she writing moral short stories, and he daubing away almost intermittently ; their lives could not be more even or devoid of incident if both were incarcerated in Pentonville, save that, I am told, they divide the sexes there. Then, too, poor Smudgley's hopeless impecuniosity leads him to

MAI

prostitute his art in order to have a "cinch" on some wealthy advertiser or other, and occasionally this leads to highly incongruous effects. Setting aside his "Solomon taking leave of Sheba," in which the artist, in an utterly futile attempt to get money out of John Corlett, has represented the fine old biblical masher presenting the dusky queen with a three-quarter length *Sporting Times* craotint of himself, he has absurdly shortened the Atlantic Ocean in the middle distance of "The International Yacht Race, 1899," so as to bring in the partisans of Mr Vaseline standing cheering on the American shore, whilst, just across the picture, Sir Thomas Lipton's *employés* from the City Road are massed on the white cliffs of Albion, yelling to *Shamrock's* sailing master to take the bung out of his brain chamber and pull *Columbia* down. Poor things! They are utterly ethereal, so entirely unworldly that if one bade them draw out Leviathan with a roach line or bind Arcturus and his sons with banjo strings, they would cheerfully attempt to comply.

And, speaking of the ethereal, dear, how I do wish you could have been with us on Monday night, when dear Charlie carried me off to the palatial premises of the National Thick Ear Club to witness an entirely new pugilistic drama which,

it is hoped, will presently drive the unclean social-problem play from the boards, and tighten the bonds already existing between the roped arena and the stage. The piece, which was specially written for the occasion, I am told, by an amateur champion of the middle-weights, who is of literary tendencies, bore the promising, if somewhat odd, title of *Under the Spread-Eagling Chestnut Tree; or the Champion Blacksmith and the Heavy-Weight Bouncer, who Worked like a Beaver, but couldn't Knock a Hole in a Tub of Butter*. A certain "Sailor Jerry" played the blacksmith, whilst the rôle of the bouncer was undertaken by a creature described on the programme as "Bourke's Big 'Un, from Battersea, open to meet all comers at 12.7." But the official synopsis, which I append, will probably convey to your mind a much more accurate idea of the piece than I could suggest :—

"As the curtain rises, Blacksmith Ben, the Royal Arch moulder, is discovered in his forge, surrounded by flywheels and dry-sand cylinders, casting a ten-ton engine bed-plate, additional appropriateness being lent to the scene by the members of the German Gymnasium Glee Club, who stand around dressed as blacksmiths and render the "Anvil Chorus" to an accompaniment of chimes rung on suspended horse-shoes and cast-iron shoful cabwheel flanges. The sporting interest in those in front is awakened at the very outset by the arrival of a half-drunken shoeing-smith (impersonated

by Dick Switch of Drury Lane, runner-up in Boss Foley's All World Handicap, 1887), who proceeds to make coarse remarks about Blacksmith Ben's sweetheart, and talks about what he'd do if any self-styled champion took a liberty with *him*. All this chewing of the rag provokes Ben, who sets about his man, first giving the spectators an exhibition of his splendid left by a series of visitations on Dick's short slats, and finally bores in with the right and puts him to sleep with a half-hooked punch over the solar plexus, the German Gymnasium Glee Club meantime obliging with "Sock me to sleep, mother, sock me to sleep."

Scene II. represents the interior of the village inn, the German Gymnasium Glee Club, dressed as waggoners and ploughboys, kindly giving "Little Brown Jug, how I love thee," as the curtain rises. As Ben is getting his supper beer he notices that Polly, the landlord's daughter, is weeping, and, asking her the reason, she tells him that a year ago her bedridden father foolishly put his name on the back of a bill to oblige a friend, and now has to face his Waterloo. The bad news has spread so swiftly that the brewers have already cut off supplies, the tobacconists have put in an execution, and Messrs Meredith & Drew's representative has come down personally and garnisheed all the heart-cakes. As she sobs out these words, the German Gymnasium Glee Club, disguised as sheriff's officers, advances to the footlights and gives Verdi's beautiful "Chorus of Men-in-Possession," from *Il Creditore*. Ben says that if the big creditor will only lay off for a week, he will cast enough engine bedplates between this and to-morrow to pay out the little 'uns; but to this the Big 'Un from Battersea, who has got possession of the bill by discounting it, flatly disagrees, and pulls out an iron winch to start taking down the bedstead on which the old man is sleeping. Ben interposes. There is a bit of rapid shouting—a blow with a stick by the Big 'Un, and—Ben challenges the world! The Battersea man then says he was reckoned to be

on the top of the heap once, and, as he still thinks he can go a bit, he's willing to meet Ben, whenever and wherever, and take a slight shade of odds he sets his head rocking. To this Ben modestly replies that it can't happen sooner than he desires it, and that if he doesn't succeed in stopping the gent with the crimped ear inside of nine minutes, all he asks is that henceforth his friends will regard him as a lobster in the can. As the curtain rolls down the German Gymnasium Glee Club gents will feelingly put up, "At eventide a mother lost her son."

Scene III. shows Canvey Island at daybreak, and the parties coming ashore from a cement barge. All the preliminaries being settled, the battle begins. The Battersea man cuts loose right away as though he'd fairly got the world by the seat of the breeches, but he's a back number. The blacksmith is soon seen to be sending them home in pairs, and, though the Big 'Un works like a beaver, he's soon too much blown to block properly, and keeps on stopping them with his nose. Early in the third round the Big 'Un clearly sees, although both his eyes are closed, that he has seriously underrated the boiler-maker, but just as he begins feeling round the ring for a lightning-rod to climb in order to avoid any further altercation, the ironmoulder drops him across the top rope with a short jolt just below the Adam's apple, and, closing with him before he falls, chucks him clean outside the ring, killing an armed warder from Bqrstal, who is travelling through the long grass on his belly in search of "strays."

Although perhaps the plot was a trifle crude, and that one felt a sort of fruitless sympathy for the poor Battersea creature from the very outset, the production, I think, gives the untruth direct to the anti-sporting person who recently said that

the only real way to elevate the stage was by the aid of jackscrews and steam derricks—not that it greatly signifies *what* the enemies of sport say or do. *Apropos* of sport, dearest, I really must tell you how grieved I am to learn that Arthur is not to be allowed to play in the Press match against the Rest of Fleet Street, still one cannot wonder that the committee should erase his name from the team after he had, at practice, solemnly chalked his bat and then asked whether he was spot or plain. Be sure you let me know whether he succeeds in his praiseworthy resolve to live without intoxicants for three consecutive days, because I have seen similarly earnest endeavours fail. Really, dear, men are mere children in these matters. Do you remember when dear Dickie the Driver and Billie Fitzditto bet each other a fiver that they would not touch alcohol for one calendar month? Of course, during that period, each went about town with a banknote in his fist ready to pay the other, but each kept a solemn face till one night Billie dropped into the Empire and found Dickie spinning round like a tee-to-tum. Dickie did not turn and fly at the sight of Billie, but welcomed him as warmly as butter on a teacake, and assured him that he was just beginning to understand why professed

teetotalers, with their queerly named cordials and essences, did not repine and die. He had just had his eighteenth absinthe, had positively enjoyed it, and, personally, didn't care if he never touched wines, spirits, or any other intoxicants again! He felt as light-hearted as a canary, he said, and to prove it offered there and then to sing any other canary in the world out of sight of land or water.

By the way, Madge, do you happen to have heard of Daisy Fraser's latest love affair? I think you must remember Daisy Fraser, dear, a tall chemical blonde, who went to a boarding-school in Greece, at which the whole curriculum consisted of the arts of love and the secret of making rose jam, the national idea of a woman's household duties. Cupid is a marvellous magician, as one fully realises when one overhears a callow youth of twenty address a still fascinating belle of forty, to whom he is giving supper, as "Baby," but Daisy's most recent break goes to prove that Love is stone deaf as well as blind.

I think I told you in my last how she gave the athletic stockbroker at Hove the mitten? She tried hard to take an affectionate interest in his dumb-bell practice and his weight-lifting; but as

he only seemed to wax enthusiastic when telling her how, whilst holding two "fifty-six" bar-bells in each hand, he could pick up a coal-scuttle in his teeth, why, as she herself said, "I really didn't see what good it could all be to *me*," so she sent her portmanteau up by rail and started to ride to town on her bike. By the time she got as far as Wivelsfield she felt so fearfully weary that she turned into the L.B. and S.C.R. station, and booked to town by the 4.27, but, strange to relate, the train was late. It had not made its appearance by quite 4.30, and Daisy, feeling very thirsty, and seeing that there was no refreshment room on the platform, strolled over to a pretty farm-house in the middle distance to get a glass of milk. Two hours later she accepted the hand of the farmer, who was a widower, in matrimony, and now she finds that he has ten children by his first wife, as well as a most distressing and appalling impediment in his speech. As a matter of hard fact he, really cannot be said to speak at all, but he opens and closes his hands spasmodically, takes a large bite of climate, shuts his eyes, and then lets off a low gurgle and a long whistle for a labial, whilst one of his dentals has been known to shake a quart of growing plums off a tree. Daisy has entered an action against the London

and Brighton company, laying the damages at £50,000.

Speaking of cycling, by the way, the general abandonment of the Ockham Road by the National Dress League is a piece of enforced economy on the local parish authorities, who will not now go to the expense of blindfolding the horses in the station omnibus to prevent them from getting scared and possibly bolting into the river.

How very unfortunate, I must say, poor Stella is in her attempts to enter the matrimonial state. It was bad enough when, after buying the licence, the brute was detected attempting to cash it at a public-house in Mayfair under the impression that it was a cheque, but I can quite understand her crowning piece of mortification when, after actually landing him at the altar, she saw the ring drop and roll down the hot-air register, where it still is; but that the minister, after refusing to go on with the ceremony, should have handed *each* of them a pamphlet respecting the bromide cure establishment at St Margaret's was indeed tough. At the same time, if he was the same Montmorency that I mean—a tall, meaty young man, with green eyes and a forceps-bump just over what in phrenology would be the organ of philopro-

genitiveness — she has not missed much. Between ourselves, I do not believe he is a Montmorency at all, his putative father having left Brighton at the time rather suddenly, and without signing the hotel register; but in any case Stella would have little use for a simple Willie who had “never known a woman’s kiss” until he met her. Surely she is not running a halfling’s kindergarten, where callow youths can be taught the ways of husbandry in six easy lessons. is she?

And now, dear, I particularly wish you to dissuade your little friend, Mina, from sending me any more poetry, for, though I quite sympathise with her in her laudable desire to earn enough money by her writings to keep her step-father in “Father Frigid’s Fresh-Courage Drops,” I am too often tempted not to pass it on to great editors on the Kipling space-rates, but to keep it back to promote the coarse hilarity of some of the people I meet at supper, especially when it contains such couplets as :

“So she bade him go forth to seek fortune and fame;
Kissed the hot tears from his cheeks whilst he too
did the same.”

I am glad to hear that your cousin in the 5th

Hussars likes my letters so much, but I cannot send him my photograph, as all that I have are counted, and Charlie would miss one instantly. But tell him, I will dream of him, and try and keep the appointment under the clock at Charing Cross. I shall be wearing a light pea-puce foulard, with mauve blossoms of the philopena on a pinkish ground, and a golden-brown straw sailor hat, with the tail feathers of the great auk on the left side. If he will wear evening dress and a white billycock, with an Epsom doll in the ribbon, I think I shall recognise him; but lest I should not do so readily, let him wave a large orange-coloured silk handkerchief from time to time in a way that will not attract attention.

Ever, dear, your loving cousin, MAUDE.

JUIN

MOUNT STREET MANSION,
SATURDAY.

DEAREST LITTLE MADGE,—

Of all the trying occasions of which I can think, it is perhaps only when a woman has to dress for the day at ten in the morning, that she really discovers the great worth of good servants. This mighty truth appealed to me very forcibly yesterday, when I had the entire strength of our *petite* establishment spinning, in order that Charlie and I should catch the coach for Epsom at the White Horse Cellars at eleven. Whilst Fifine was curling my hair, Parsons was lacing up one, and the usually dis-

obliging Matildarann the other of my boots, and good old cook, who seldom puts herself out save when it is to gain some base pecuniary advantage over me, was hunting out all my jewelled scarfpins—for everything is an excuse for scarfpins nowadays, dear. Our small pin-headed page was deftly filling my gold scent-flask with fragrant Boronia, and in the best room Charlie's man was noisily removing everything in the shape of cups and saucers and replacing them with tumblers. And why tumblers, ~~do you ask?~~ Well, little one, the wise but seeming simple goats of Candia, being shot with an arrow, straightway browse on the dittany shrub to counteract the poison in the wound; the tortoise, having eaten a viper, forthwith hunts for wild marjoram: the dragon, ~~when~~ his sight grows dim, brightens his eyes with aromatic fennel; cranes, for a disordered digestion take a surfeit of sea water; and—the “piculum oi Falernian” which your modern woman, who has been round the town on the previous evening craves, comes, not in a breakfast cup, but in a wire-nippered, foil-topped quart bottle, to each tumbler of the contents of which a liqueur glass of the *vieux Eau de Vie* may with advantage be added. Pitch all your grilled bacon, and

frescoed fried eggs, frayed at the edges—a dish as indissolubly associated with the British breakfast-table as fleas with sheep dogs—out of a back window ; try a piping hot boneless kedgeriee, with barely enough of the nectar I have named to cause you to adopt a private system of articulating, and a brisking coach-ride of eighteen or twenty miles to follow, and, if you have any complaints to make, you may communicate them in the usual manner. To any suffering sister, who feels so consciously cheap in the morning that fourpence-three-farthings a gross would appear to be a somewhat excessive price to pay for herself, I strongly advise a spin on “coachback,” as dear old Dickie the Driver says.

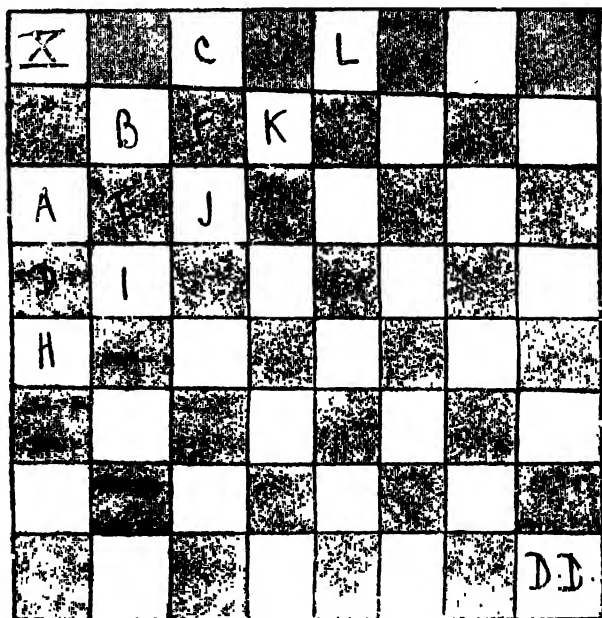
And what a sensation a well turned-out coach causes ! with its rattling splinter-bars and jangling pole-chains ; it compels even the attention of the cloyed and satiated, the hopelessly *blasé*. As we bowled along the Fulham Road yesterday morning, the short, sharp, occasional “Tummy-da, tummy-da,” of the horn brought even Tottie to her window, in a new pink satin dressing-gown, eating buttered toast with unwashed fingers, and caused even Dolly to pause in the middle of mixing herself a very dark-complexioned brandy-

and-soda—no mulatto, but a “regular nigger”—to look out and leer at our men and turn up her nose at our women. There exists only one great drawback to coaching for the woman who is not fortunate enough to be able to reckon herself one of smart society's real *élégantes*: there is the dreadful, ever-present apprehension of an accident occurring. The constant fear of a smash-up, the dread of the shame and mortification of being undressed, whilst unconscious, by a lot of doctors, some of whom may know enough about the articles of the *intime* toilette to recognise that one's foulard, or percale, or such things are distinctly not of the *dernier cri*, must far outweigh all the pleasure and excitement to be derived from road-coaching, I think.

As for Epsom itself, why, frankly, dear, I did not care much for it. Epsom is too levelling. One becomes associated with persons well dressed enough to be patricians, but whose conversation discovers them to be the scum of the proletariat. For instance, Charlie was introduced to a certain “Captain” (for I have doubts about his commission) Splorger, who, doubtless with the best intent, tried hard to make me back a winner. I had never set eyes on the crude, boorish creature

before he was brought in to share our "cold collection," as he called it, yet, only twenty minutes afterwards, when I was sitting on the box all alone, he suddenly popped his head in and gasped rather than hoarsely whispered, "Nanty! Don't put it about, but it's a pinch—Honeymoon!" Only imagine it! And again, calling it "a pinch," indeed! Why, do you know, Madge, I had seen the word, or a synonym for it, written in chalk on my own doorstep—probably by some sporting working man on his way to his daily toil. Some of these poor slaves are so eaten up by the craze for betting, that all day long they muse and dream of nothing else, going mechanically through their tasks, thinking of some racehorse's name—fully a week before! One good reason why I did not back it was that I was somewhat "shy of the Ready John," as the Captain himself phrased it, for Charlie could not collect some sixty pounds which he had won over the Derby on Wednesday, despite the fact that it was owed him by one of the very best men in Tattersall's Ring, a Mr Dick Dunn. The reason why, he explained most humorously, poor fellow, by the aid of a small chessboard which he found on an inside page of *The Sportsman*, and I venture to submit the

knotty problem for your solution, dear. Here is the diagram :—



Please imagine X, in the top left corner, to be Charlie. In order to connect with a sum of money which he has won, he has to reach DD without encountering A (Alec Harris), B (Bill Schlesinger), C (Ben Ccooper), D (Bill Forster), E (Harry Emerson) F (Mister Fry), G (Harry Goodson), H (Tom Hoodless), I (Joe Thompson), J (Bob Topping), K (Ricketty Marks), and L (Lance Logan), to each of whom he owes other and larger sums.

Possibly you may be able to see a loophole, but *we* could not discern it, so, failing completely to realise our cherished ideal—like the maiden who got married in Lent and dreamt she was going to heaven between two layers of hot pancakes—Charlie said we might as well rejoin the pollies on the coach, which we did, he, experiencing a sudden revulsion of thought and forming a determination to tear money from a fatuous world by *some* means, getting inside the vehicle, all amongst the rugs and overcoats, in order to roughly organise and think out the preliminary details of an International Lighting and Heating Company, to pump the much needed surplus heat from the burning lakes of the future state to the new flats in Buckingham Gate and the surrounding neighbourhood. It is a long, long ride back to town—especially for those who backed the animal that was left so far behind in the race that the jockey had to get down to see if his mount was really anchored—but, for a good part of the way at least, I was laughing over Roddy Wibbikins' story of a bacchanalian sportsman, whom he knew, who lived in a long, long—aye, even longer than that—road out Putney way, who got fearfully intoxicated after backing the second horse in the Derby, and made matters distinctly worse on his

return to town by drowning his sorrows at some house of entertainment near the Strand, until the next morning was fairly under way. It was indeed break o' day when the hansom containing him began to traverse the long, long street aforesaid.

"What number, Mister?" the cabby inquired, calling down through the trap-door in the roof.

"Oh, keep strai'long till I stop yer," he replied, not intending to drive slap up to the very door.

Finally, he stopped the shabby shoful at a point about ten or twelve rods from his own garden-gate, weighed out the fare, and wobbled on afoot. In the uncertain light of early dawn, and his fearful state of fuddlement, it took him some time to identify his residence, and, even when he did so, he seemed disinclined to enter it. He braced himself against the front gate, and, after arguing with himself for eight or ten minutes, came to the conclusion that he was just fuddled enough to make mistakes possible, and certainly he seemed to be right on the portals of an important error. He glared at the number inscribed on the glass fanlight. Instead of the 206 he wanted he was confronted by 509. He rubbed his eyes, pulled himself together, and glared at it again. It was still 509. Then he wondered how it happened

that he had got on the wrong side of the street, and several turnings too far up. He made a zig-zag across the road, now walking, now running, and fetched up with his nose against the scarlet pillar-box, which had somehow attracted him like a loadstone. With a low, coarse oath, and nipping his nasal organ between his left thumb and forefinger to arrest the flowing claret, he started sedately to recross the road in a straight line. My whiskers and straps! It was *still* 509, though he recognised every curtain in its windows, and every laurel bush in the front garden! He studied it from every possible point of view, even trying to stand on his head to read the number, but it perversely remained 509. Utterly bewildered, and somewhat faint from loss of blood, he sat down on the front step and waited till a policeman came along.

"Cons'bl'," said he, "I wan' number 206, 'nif you take me there, I'll gi' yer half-crow'."

"Well, what's the matter with brassin'-up and going straight in?" observed the officer with a grin, at the same time feeling in his back pocket for the tickets for the inevitable concert in aid of the funds of the Police Orphanage.

"Why, donchersee? This is 509, no' 206!"

"Oh, wickets!" cried the intelligent officer, as

he dropped the silver coin into his overalls and caught sight of the pane of glass over the door. "This is 206 all serene, but yer fanlight 's turned over!"

Would that Roddy's stories had lasted out the journey, but, after a few stoppages, the man grew melancholy, and Bobbie Prescott even elected to take me into his confidence concerning his latest little bit of trouble; why *is* it, I wonder, that every man in London who gets into a tangle comes to me for sympathy? In this case it seems that, about a week ago, Bobbie Prescott arrived at the conclusion that it was neither more nor less than a beast of a lap-dog that was alienating his little wife's affection from him. Naturally, he was extremely angry, as he had hoped to catch some well-fixed City shark at the very least; but he smothered his disappointment, watched his opportunity, and, as soon as his partner's back was turned, made a come-along gesture to the terrier, and lured it down to Hungerford Stairs. Here, in the gathering shades of evening, Bobbie fastened securely to the pet's collar the three second-hand flat-irons which he had previously purchased in Newport Market; then he shoved the calamitous canine gently over the parapet, and, as "Rags" failed to tread water actively enough to

keep the flat-irons above the surface, he went down somewhat suddenly by the bows, and has not reappeared. For two whole days Beatrice sobbed as though her heart-strings would snap, until Bobbie, to "recover the market" and divert any possible suspicion from himself, advertised a reward of £5 for the dog's return. Though at the time Beatrice readily declared how "very, very sweet" this was of him, and literally covered him with kisses, there have since been "restored" to the house 322 dogs of the breed described, eleven of which Beatrice has individually and successively identified as "her Rags," and temporarily adopted, till one of the bunch shall by some familiar trick reveal himself. "Dead tough *I* call it!" as Mr Sloan observed when his mount, poor Holocauste, smashed himself up in the race for the Derby. And this reminds me that on Monday I have to go to Marlborough Street Police Court with dear Winifred Walpole, who has been summoned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for drowning a batch of unrequired kittens in cold water before 1st April. Though the Society may find it difficult to enforce in a court of justice its inflexible rule for setting light to the copper-fire whenever superfluous felines are to be done

away with, there can be no argument as to the remorselessness of taking the poor sleeping things straight from a purring, hot parent, and immersing them suddenly in an icy element.

You must forgive me, little one, for not having purchased your coloured-edged hem-stitched frilling, but I have not forgotten it. True, I was out shopping on Thursday, but all my time went in encountering interesting people, including the pretty Marchioness of Georgia, who, during the Marquis' absence in South Africa, is living on a little toy farm at Hendon and a distant relative; Mr "Algy" Biggleswade, who was giving a stand-up lunch to three smart men at the ham-and-beef shop in Albemarle Street; and the always immaculate "Bertie" Chatteris, who had paused in his constitutional to get his wonderful boots varnished outside the "Haunch of Venison" in Brook Street. Then, too, Lord "Choppy" Crediton was walking in Cork Street, about ten or fifteen paces behind a tall, blonde girl, in purple satin with a braided pattern, who nodded pleasantly to the porter as she entered the Burlington. The Viscountess Virot and her new lady-companion, a Mademoiselle Lesbienne, a decided brunette—the Viscountess is dark also, but she is scarcely as lustrous as her lady-in-wait-

ing ; has not the Viscountess an odd penchant for choosing lovely companions ?—were both “ trying on ” at Piola’s ; whilst pretty Mrs “ Ducky ” Diplock was ordering garments to which one can refer only by innuendo at what was till lately Lady Warwick’s “ white ” shop. But everywhere—everywhere in my mind’s eye could I see what a fearful botch you have made of your new opera cloak, and what to tell you to do with it I really do not know. My dear child, you positively cannot wear it at its present length ; it *must*—the dictum is imperative and peremptory—drag upon the floor at least three-quarters of a yard, unless—well, unless you are willing to let everybody think that you go to the theatre in a twopenny omnibus. *That*, of course, is quite impossible ; still, the scale on which all the best modistes now base their decrees are (1) 27 in. if a brougham is suggested ; (2) 36 in. if a pair-horse victoria ; and (3) 45 in. up to 48 in. if a C-spring, leather slung, old first^e-family Barker with quartered panels. But why not offer the garment to Mr and Mrs Iky Mo, who daily advertise that they have “ private customers ” sitting in a state of nudity, “ waiting to be supplied ” ; still, after all, the means by which it is disposed of are entirely insignificant—like the darkie’s advice to the

pedestrian who hesitated as to which of the two roads he should take to Cow Flat, "Which ebber one ye trabbels, boss, I guess ye'll soon be dam sorry ye didn't take de udder"—so that it goes, and goes instantly.

I fully intended describing a few *hautes, nouveautés, modes* and things for your edification, Madge, dear; but the rain, rain, rain—nothing can be seen but rain. It seems only to pause long enough to spit on its hands and get a better hold; but I will try and write you a lovely long letter some time about Ascot week. Meanwhile, bearing in mind the generally accepted dictum that no smart woman can dress properly under two thousand a year, and keeping sight of the fact that among the married women in the smart set more than a hundred have husbands whose whole income does not exceed this figure; the active speculative mind has quite a large and expansive field to stroll about in.

By the way, dear, I hear of a most amusing little incident which set all Half-Moon Street laughing yesterday. That most popular little lady in racing, and indeed all other smart, circles, Mrs Donnington-Daffyn, whose *naïve* little after-dinner stories even the men are not above retailing, is hourly looking forward to the arrival

of a rosy babelet. Friday was the date first given, and, early on the morning of that day, a waggoner arrived with a load of straw, with the compliments of the Earl of Foxbush, and proceeded to strew it in the roadway in front of the house. Half-an-hour later, another carter with a second load arrived. Having presented the kind regards of Sir George Gimel at the house, he proceeded to scatter *his* straw on top of Lord Foxbush's. At ten o'clock yet a third load was shot and sprinkled, this time on behalf of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Seidlitzpowderburg ; whilst, at 10.20, two of Lord Brasenose Baconthorpe's stablemen were seen bedding down an additional couple of loads, now on a level with the top of the area railings. Then it was that an intelligent police-constable rang the bell and said that if any of the three straw-waggoners still waiting round the corner in Curzon Street attempted to unload he should instantly report the matter at Vine Street Police Station, as all traffic in the street had already been stopped. I wonder, Madge, which side of the house the little stranger will resemble?

Au revoir, little one ; also *toujours a toi*.—Your affectionate cousin,
MAUDE.

JUILLET

MOUNT STREET MANSIONS.

TUESDAY.

DEAREST MADGE,—

Have you ever, I wonder, been inside a county prison? For the life of me I cannot remember, but *I* had that weird experience yesterday, pursuant to a privilege enjoyed by Charlie as a juryman in respect of his small patrimonial potato plot down in Surrey. That I may not tell you explicitly *which* prison, is due to the fact that I greatly offended the somewhat squeamish governor of the place very shortly after my arrival, but this much I will say: it lies in a sweet little hamlet of Surrey, about equi-distant from Hyde-Park Corner and the "Hen's Friend" (or whatever the celebrated hostelry is called), at Sutton. It is a fine old moated stronghold, with a distinct "past"—indeed, one famous historian has said of it: "Here, in the yeare 1327, lay the good King Edward in chains, while his son usurped the sceptre and

made a sickly bluff at reigning; whereas the Queen and the Earl of Mortimer really ran things between them, the latter wearing the King's clothes, shaving with his best razor, making love to the Queen, and winding up the clock every night for her, just as though he owned the blessed place;" and you may be sure, Madge, the talented historian would never have dared to say such things unless they were so. Both sexes are accommodated at "the great short-time shop," as the inmates facetiously call it, and when they have completed their stay, and thanked the master or the matron, as the case may be, for a very pleasant time, they are ushered out into the village street—the females at eight and the males at nine A.M.—whilst the delighted residents of the little village, having double-locked their front doors, peer over their window blinds with an interested but apprehensive air, as if they were watching to see what the newly emancipated ones would do next. But I sadly put my foot in it when I asked the august governor if any of his charges ever ran away.

"Base ingrates—yes," he replied, with regal piteousness, "though were it not for the daily demonstration of the fact that the classes with which we have to deal are completely devoid of

all sense, sentiment, and humanity, we might well marvel that such attempts ever should be made. That human beings, surrounded by every comfort and convenience—compatible, of course, with the terms and conditions under which they are staying with us—should voluntarily expose themselves to the risks, dangers, and general hardships besetting ordinary tramps, is incredible, incomprehensible ! ”

At this I sought to change the subject, but fear I only pained him the more ; I enquired if he did not consider the silent system and the much branded garb needlessly brutalising.

“ Dear me, not in the least ! ” he cried ; “ silence is golden, as you may glean from any school-child’s copy-book ; whilst as to dress, man never was intended to lay claim to beauty. He should be the trunk of the tree, not the foliage. He is the unseen carpenter, whose energy shoves on the gorgeous transformation scene ; he should not be the gorgeous transformation scene itself ! ”

How very sensible and true ! I declare I began to think him not so hard a person after all, the more so when he assured me that all so-called “ punishment ” has now been abolished in favour of healthful games. “ Be good enough to step this way,” said he, and led us to the courtyard.

JUILLET

"You were noticing our great bell," the rule remarked, as the open air was reached; "it sounds the hour for rising. Alarum clocks were found wholly inefficacious; our guests invariably placed them under their mattresses, and when the hammers went off, they tore the bed-ticks, and scattered the feathers over the—er—dressing-rooms. Now here," and he picked up a long hickory handle with a sizable iron head on one end of it, "is one of our little toys—a fourteen-pound niblick." I could scarcely repress a smile; it looked *so* like a sledge-hammer. "Yonder," he continued, pointing to what seemed a stone-pile, "is a heap of granite golf-balls, which our guests attack with the niblicks thus—and thus. It is a fine, healthful, thew-developing game—if a little tiring. We call it 'Granite Golf.'" After this, the urbane official led us into a shed, along the wall of which a long, low bench was partitioned off into small compartments. In the end one of all was a wicker-basket nearly full of short lengths of tarred rope. Taking up one of these lengths in his left hand, and turning it over affectionately, the all-important personage remarked:

"Now, here's a charming diversion when the weather is too wet for out-door sports or tilling of the glebe. This was once a lovely flower—

(and he held up the rope's end)—it bore a graceful purple blossom, and was called by the horde unlearned in botany, Hemp. It is held in the left hand—so—and, with the thumb and forefinger of the right—so—the player plucks it to shreds—so—repeating to himself, 'She loves me'—'loves me not.' 'She loves me'—'loves me not,' and so forth; but retrace your steps to my office, and I will show you our cricketing records. I flatter myself we can put a fairly useful eleven in the field, though I must admit we were beaten by Pentonville in our last match, Still they were *very* strong. This is the record."

He unstrapped a large scrap-book as he spoke, and opened it at a well-thumbed page, whereon appeared the scores :

PENTONVILLE.

No. 39 c. 123, b. 7	4
No. 127 b. 7	12
No. 72 not out	98
No. 352 b. 49	24
No. 146 c. 53, b. 7	0
No. 261 thrown out by 86	4
No. 338 b. 49	13
No. 65 run out	2
No. 173 stumped 60, b. 158	0
No. 327 b. 231 b. 13	17
No. 43 not out	7
Extras	1

And, beneath this, was pasted in the report of the match, cut from *The Sporting Life* :—

“This highly interesting match which, under the personal patronage of the visiting justices promises to become a delightful annual reunion, took place yesterday, and resulted in a victory for the visitors. No fault could possibly be found with the weather, which, with the tasteful uniforms of the players, and the courteous geniality of the guardians, went to make the afternoon the great success it was. Though the spectators in blue were, to some extent, compelled to look fierce for the purpose of justifying their salaries, officiousness was wholly absent, and a most enjoyable day was spent by one and all. The chaplain of Pentonville, who was one of the umpires, was, we regret to say, bitten in the leg by one of the home team; whilst Gaoler Bird (from Marlborough Street), who was the other umpire, sustained a smashed jaw, but these were the only casualties. No. 72 promises to be a great acquisition to Pentonville, and as he is a “lifer”—it is no harm, we believe, to state here that he is the famous Stamford Street murderer, though he escaped the extreme penalty on account of provocation—his services will be available for some time to come. It was a pity that he could not quite complete his century, but ringing cheers went up when his own number, 72, was reached. Of the batsmen of the home team, No. 953 has a fine commanding style, is a beautiful hitter on the off-side, and one for whom a bright future might have been confidently predicted, but, to the regret of all lovers of the game, he is to be executed on Thursday, the 22nd inst. He is not without hopes of a reprieve, however, in which happy event, and his continuing to stick to the game, he, and all other promising exponents of the national pastime, will always find a friend in

YOUR REPRESENTATIVE.”

And yet, dear, there are scores and scores of well-

meaning, but mistaken philanthropists, who are for ever fidgeting over the alleged ill-treatment of these ill-advised social blisters, and who persistently send superfluous matronesses and half-baked missionaries to meet them on their becoming outmates, to talk hot air to them, whereas, as both Charlie and I observed, the only greeting that is at all warmly appreciated is the cordial kiss and the slap-on-the-back from a pal still immersed in sin, and the assurance that one is looking, not merely all right, but a perfect (vital-fluidy) "treat." And truly, what good can be expected to accrue from throwing the unsatisfying dream of "Christianity" at an erring sister who has regained her freedom, only to discover that her only sartorial elegancies—the little bits of finery on which her wayward heart was set—have been hopelessly, irretrievably ruined by being folded and packed by the steam-hammer process, and afterwards baked in an oven. "Christianity" forsooth! Begin with your officials.

But a truce to sermonising.

We have just got back, Grace Roslin and I, from the furious feminine fray going on round the *lingerie* counters at "Peter's," and, when Charlie sees my bills, he will probably remark,

as the late Mr A. Ward might have done, that it would have been money in his pocket not to have been born. Not that I have got one half of the pretty things I wanted, for the *dame du monde* who would secure bargains at the drapery sales, dear, really needs to be physically prepared to sustain life for ten or twelve hours on tabloids, wedge herself edgewise through human columns, punch the ball, pike and swoop, fell trees, trample on the fainting, and help bury the dead—accomplishments I do not possess in any marked degree. Still, with one loud-voiced, fibrous creature in a perfectly hideous hat of wine-red tulle, gathered on a wired chenille foundation of emerald green, with a trailing wreath of imitation huckleberries, I positively *did* come to blows. Simultaneously with myself she “spotted” a dainty pair of purple panne shrimping overalls in the seven-and-eleven basket, and, but for my retaining a double-grape-vine “twist” on the garments while beating the creature off, I should probably have lost them altogether. There are many little inconveniences to be undergone, I must admit, and to the girl who cannot “put it across” a jostling opponent, the sales are of about as much use as a penny palm fan in *Perdition*,

but the brisk demoiselle, who is on the mark with her campstool and sandwich-case before the early doors open, can rely on getting the full flavour. Above all else "Peter's" is the *chez-moi* of the blouse, and they showed me one there to-day of a bold design in three shades of red, suggestive of an impressionist note of a tomato patch by an intemperate pillar-box painter, which I should most certainly have secured, but that I no longer attend dog-fights.

You will be interested to learn, Madge, that smart society is all agog over the engagement of the young Marquis of Mortarborough to Miss Ollie Gobb, only daughter of the great Silas B. Gobb, of Cincinnati cast-iron-stove-leg fame. His lordship formally announced the welcome news to the creditors under his bankruptcy yesterday, when, sad to relate, two of them fell dead. Like so many multi-millionaires of the new world, Mr Gobb is of quite humble origin, and obtained his first start in life by selling hot frankfurters from a steam can on the Hudson River boats, himself having enough to eat only when business was at a standstill. Though at first somewhat prejudiced against the Marquis, who had been falsely represented to him as a *roué*, Mr Gobb now waxes enthusi-

astic over the domestic virtues of his prospective son-in-law, declaring that "if all young fellers was as white as Hildy (Hildebrand) there'd be mighty few dollars in runnin' speak-easys."

I am not at all sure that your little friend, who wishes to prepare her own trousseau, is wise in doing so, since many reduced gentlewomen undertake plain needlework so cheaply nowadays that it hardly pays one to take the trouble oneself; still, she might get some useful hints on cutting-out, I should think, from a book called "Colenso on Combinations," a new edition of which is, I observe, being daily advertised. They should not come below the knees; also put them in a yoke band. But you may tell her from me, Madge, that she is entirely wrong in saving that Messrs Parkins & Gotto have added to their premises a department for the supply of these garments; the show-card in their window inscribed "Ladies' Bags" refers to articles of quite another description altogether.

By the way; you have not yet said how you succeeded with the luncheon dish of fricandellians of the tripe which was left over from the card-party supper?

Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE.

A O U T

WARMBAD-ON-THE-RHINE,
WEDNESDAY.

SWEET LITTLE MADGE,—

To this tiny mushroom of a Spa, more or less endowed with mineral proclivities, and restful as a dead chick in a refrigerator, have Charlie and I—I, by the way, having first cork-screwed the *visticum* out of the frosted-cake editor of *The Real Gentlewoman*; which prompts me to ask how would it fare with those hopeless individuals—men—if considerate women did not look after them? Without Athene, or Minerva, call her which you like, Ulysses in these days would have been hiding under a berth in the *wagon-lit*, lugged out by the leg at some such place as Lyons or Tounesse, charged with the Gallic equivalent for macing-the-rattler, and jabbed into jail, while the station-master played scales and variations on a tin cornet for the train to re-start—have Charlie and I, I

repeat, flown at last. Both of us were in acute need of complete repose; poor Charlie being sadly cast down by the failure to go to allotment of his latest production, a company to supply potted air to divers for rendering staying-down operations easier of duration than at present, whilst I was completely collapsed after the gaieties of the season. And Warmbad, though it is only just over the Rhine, is *so* tranquil, *so* quiet, *so* different to the restless, giddy land we have left across the border—France—where they never even dream of smacking a baby's dress improver without first waving the *tricolore* and beating a drum. Here we get that pure air, slightly scented with the natural *crème de menthe*, which is so essential to persons who have seldom reflected in town save with their digestive organs; whilst if our pygmean spa seems a wee bit dull at times, we have nevertheless the late butterflies and the piping bullfinches—(it was a Warmbad bullfinch, dear, that used to pipe the "Anvil Chorus" so realistically that the sparks could be counted as they flew off his little narrative)—to help us to forget that *la morte saison* is upon us. I have positively *doted* on all singing birds ever since I was quite a wee thing: I suppose I got it from my old

nurse, Sara, who used to wander about the leafy lanes of Billericay on the spring evenings, listening to the wild songsters, "the cuckolds and the martingales," as she used to have it.

Warmbad is just now full to overflowing with well-known people who were similarly embarrassed themselves prior to their coming here, and prominent among the "cures" is a leading owner of racehorses, whose physicians only sent him away after dining with him and observing him attempt to open a black grape with the nut-crackers. What odd traits of character are developed at the dinner table! Do you remember, Madge, a certain little birthday celebration at dear old Kettner's when you informed poor dear Algy at eleven in the evening that he was the only real friend you had got in the world, and ten minutes later sent a silver dish of faultless *Faisan sauté à la Oscar* spinning at his head, and shouted out that you would not stop in the place with such a 'despicable cad? I wonder what really did become of him? I was told that he died of blood-poisoning in Yokohama after having Duckie de Tuppenny's portrait and a true lover's knot tattooed on the end of his back with a poisoned needle? He was a strange mixture of high and low

spirits—though I daresay the former state would have preponderated with him if that theatrical girl, whose photograph he used to carry about inside his watch, and whose letters he used to fold over to show his dearest friends the beginnings of, hadn't been and gone and picked up with a disendowed clergyman and Za-Za'd herself, as Charlie says.

Amongst other notables staying here are the Duke of C——, whose sensational resignation at the Cokernut Club I daresay you have heard talked about. But His Grace warmly defends his action in withdrawing, averring that the Cokernut is hopelessly in the hands of its steward, who positively allows the servants to go to bed at four in the morning, whereas, if only one had been allowed to sit up to answer the smoking-room bell, the Duke would not have been reduced—failing everything else—to suck the methylated spirit out of the cigar-lighter by means of a Sam Collins' straw, or whatever it is called; and also the once beautiful Baroness de G—— and her pretty boy husband, though the Baroness does not take "the cure," nor even bathe in public. This luxury had been barred her all her life, she told me, through her lady mother's thoughtlessness in yearning for fruit at

an interesting period of her life—yearnings which had decorated her luckless offspring with a basket of raspberries on the *embonpoint*, a slice of pineapple on the left flank, and a prickly pear over the pancreatic region. Thank heaven, *my* mamma never yearned, or, as she never went in much for fruit, my milk-white and happily unembellished body might have resembled the 22-carat window at Hunt & Roskell's on a Christmas Eve.

No, the poor baroness's sole reason for being at Warmbad is that she simply cannot remain at her beloved Trouville on account of the disgusting infidelity of her consort. The little wretch actually used to "dope" her nightcap, dear, and then, when the drug took effect, and she fell asleep, he would sneak out to the notorious Rue de Marmalade, where titled creatures, who have flung their bonnets over the windmills, and even local 'duchesses in high spirits, resort to play at mouse-in-the-copper and all sorts of perfectly awful games! Still, a woman of fifty (at the very least, Madge), who marries a young man of less than half her age in the hope of teaching him to love her, may often have to make a discovery and, at the same time say nothing about it, but when it comes

to being dosed with anæsthetics regularly every night and only recovering, always with a racking headache, to welcome home a half-foxed spouse, "with a tongue on him like a yellow-plush sofa" (so she tells me), why—why that's whar she go's'n bruk her molasses-jug, as dear old Uncle Remus is wont to observe. Society has ever been regarded as a boon by persons who were married and wished to forget the fact, but the poor baroness shuns it, and the perennial look of heartache on her face as she tells the story ought to teach other wealthy baronesses better. Most women naturally suspect treachery—being treacherous themselves—but *he* certainly might employ a more judicious duplicity; how many hundreds of the Chevalier Bayards of society are veritable Old Dog Trays at 5st. 7lb. at home, as they say in the horse-watching reports?

As the greater part of the day here—and frequently a portion of the evening—is spent in bathing, many of the toilettes are very striking. A tall blonde beauty came down to the water this morning in a jaunty little short knife-kilted tunic of pale blue pastel linen over a slight silk undervest of shrimp pink, which bore the wearer's monogram and telephone number in gold thread.

With brown silk stockings, gartered below the knee, and high-heeled Kate-Cutler tan *bottines*, this looked so delightfully promising and *chic* that it not only attracted the parsonic notice but completely broke up what had until then been quite a quiet little game of croquet at the rectory, which is on the way to the *promenade des blanches*.

Neither coarse lace nor insertion ever should have a place in a bodice of a bathing-dress, unless the wearer is prepared to appear at the dinner table with a replica of the pattern sun-burnt upon her fair bosom; though, by the way, the best modistes are now giving their favourite patronesses dinner gowns a little higher in the neck, a proceeding which, singularly enough, is extended to the best boys who foot the bills for the favourite patronesses. The evenings here would seem pretty long, I fear—for there is no theatre of any sort, no estaminet, nothing at all to do but fish for crevettes, “play to the billiards,” or sit about and encourage the phlegmatic flirtations of the elderly German military men, who wander around proposing to young Englishwomen from force of habit—had we not formed a tale-pitching syndicate: we all sit in a circle and take it in turns to tell tales, just

as Boccaccio's lords and ladies did in "The Decameron," and last night it was the poor baroness's turn. And she told us a merry story of a little practical joke that was played amongst the peasantry in the wine-growing province of Ay, where the baroness autumned last year.

It had been, if you remember, dear, a very unsettled year as regards weather, and the grapes suffered proportionately. They were said indeed to be the poorest that had been grown in the Ay vineyards for many years—too poor even to warrant their wanton destruction by the "little foxes" casually alluded to by the first great historical polygamist and poet of passion, Solomon—and the resultant wine was so thin that it was hopeless to expect even the most bleary diner-out ever to call for '99's; but that was no good and sufficient reason why the young men and the maidens of the greatest wine-growing district in Europe should forego their harvest supper or abate it by one bacchanalian song or a single clumsy but earnest and uncounted kiss, and so when the unluscious globules had all been squeezed in the press to an ultimate point of tantalising dryness, and the local manager had gone to England to relate to quite a different kind of press what they were going to do about

it, Gavroche and Tortillard, and Amanda and Lisette, and every other sunburnt son and daughter of the vine in that and the surrounding settlements, gathered in old Lechaud's barn and "fairly let the tail go with the hide," as Molière used to put it. Lord, how they danced! And the mad, wild ditties they sang—and then the drinking of toasts!

True, they had only *petit bleu* to drink—a *petit bleu* so crude and elementary that at sight of it the average British stomach would have cheerfully resigned its office, together with all past emoluments of that office; but to the laughing, joyous, light-hearted crowd it was *Mouton Rothschild* at the very least. It was strong and mischievous enough, at any rate, to get into the head of Gavroche Carton, and with cheeks aglow he pressed the suit he had been urging all the summer with the sloe-eyed Lisette Marchand to a point that almost called for the application of the cold *douche*.

Now, as I have often told you, little cousin, there are two highly important periods constantly occurring in a woman's life. One is when her honour is at stake, and the other is when it isn't. And it was just at the time when Lisette Marchand was trying to take firm resolutions

with regard to Gavroche Carton that, as somebody says, a strange thing happened.

Tortillard Dubois went out somewhere and returned with a venerable stranger. He brought in a queer old chap, with a ragged red beard and a rough head of hair, and introduced him as Monsieur le Curé, explaining the old chap's strong hirsute individuality by saying that he was a Russ, and therefore a most welcome guest. Affability evidently was the newcomer's long suit; he picked up people's names so readily and remembered all the funny little stories that were told him so keenly and minutely, that he won the hearts of all. And especially did he interest himself in Gavroche and Lisette. There was nothing priestly in the way he told Gavroche what a happy fellow he might be if he only screwed his courage to the sticking place and patronised Old Mother Somebody's Courting Powders; there was no celibate and cloistered chill about the somewhat frequent "kiss of blessing" he bestowed on the happy Lisette.

In the midst of all the merriment, Tortillard Dubois, who was generally acknowledged to be a sort of master of the ceremonies, had an idea.

Why should Lisette, in the words of Tottie Coffin, wait till to-morrow, since she might be

queen of the bolster to-night? Monsieur le Curé, he said, had offered there and then to unite the young people in the bonds of matrimony; and even if they had had a mind to demur, which they certainly hadn't, the rest of the company might have insisted upon it, if only for the sake of the fun.

So they were married—married as they stood there surrounded by comrades and corn sacks. And the bride's garter was cut into favours, and a ringing cheer started Gavroche's old horse as, with the bride and the groom in the rumbling old cart behind him, he set out on the three-mile run that lay between the barn and his owner's parents' home.

As the hum of the cart wheels died down to a mere vehicular purr, Tortillard Dubois, who had been observed to be struggling with an apparent fit of apoplexy, burst into a roar of laughter, and, snatching the wig and the whiskers from the head and face of the 'Ruussian priest, disclosed—Pierre Dubosq!

"Now, then," cried Tortillard, with the tears streaming down his puckered cheeks, "the saddle-horse is here ready for you; just one more glass, and then, after them—after them to Father Carton's old shanty and tell them

we find that the priest is not properly ordained !”

Dubosq, the licensed joker of the vineyards, whom all had supposed to be at home with a sprained ankle, drank another tall glass of the unrectified red ink, and promised to return soon with a full and truthful account of his adventures, which could scarcely fail, he said, to be the veritable remedy, *id est* ; the real thing.

But alas ! though they waited all night, Pierre Dubosq did not return.

Not his fault that the old mare he was riding mistook, in the pale moonlight, a dry old ditch for the continuation of the dusty road ; all the same the delay caused in getting her out again was unfortunate to a degree. One cannot guard against such untoward happenings.

Arriving in hot haste at Père Carton’s door, he was received by the old souls most cordially. They themselves could not have ordered it better, they said ; Lisette was such a good girl——

Oh, yes, they had reached home ; in fact, they had retired !

They must have thought it odd, poor simple souls ! that young Dubosq should brush them both violently aside and mount the only stair-

case the house possessed, three steps at a time.

"Gavroche! Gavroche!" he shouted, hammering on the door that faced the top of the stairs, and beneath which the reflection of a light could still be seen; and presently Gavroche appeared. Then, in words that literally trod the heels off one another, Dubosq blurted out something about the whole thing being a joke—a happy thought of 'Tortillard's—and, of course, if it hadn't been for the old mare falling into the ditch——

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Gavroche, "it is too late, *mon vieux*, too late! If you'd only ha' got here about seven—nay *five* minutes ago——"

But Dubosq, swooning and falling backwards down the wooden stairs with a loud crash, prevented him saying more.

Thus ended the baroness's story. Gavroche Carton and Lisette Carton were still living happily together, she said, although Gavroche could never afterwards be brought to see the necessity for incurring the expense of a notary; but Pierre disappeared most mysteriously. True, a villager, noticing old man Carton busily burying an ominous oblong bundle, all rolled up in rush mats, in his back garden two days later, had asked what it might be, and was told it was a

sample parcel of late-blossoming *facetie* that had got spoiled by being kept too long in the dry, and, as old man Carton was a great Latinist and advanced far above his fellows in floriculture, this reply was considered satisfactory ; but Dubosq was never seen in the village again.

How odd that you should ask after Alicia Mawbey, from whom I had a long letter only yesterday—a most cordial epistle, literally reeking with good spirits—not to mention liqueurs—whilst there is one page that looks as though it had been slept on. Dear Alicia's main trouble appears to be with her maid-servants, seven of whom she has had to bundle off in as many weeks, while the eighth, who was hired principally out of sympathy for her aged mother, who had been again recently blessed with twins, turns out to be a perfect terror. Happening to experience a little difficulty the other morning in getting the kitchen fire to light, this ignorant creature poured more than a pint of paraffin over the smouldering coals, but finding the oil to be of such inferior quality that it would not blaze up, she straightway put on her hat and jacket, went over to the oilshop in the Lisson Grove where she purchased the stuff, and broke three of the oilman's ribs with a dog's wrought-

iron drinking trough, which she took from the doorway. "All this delay and flummery over a paltry threepennyworth of oil," says Alicia, "came precious near causing me to do in an appointment I had with a very dear old legal friend, who neglected to resign his position of trust until it was too late, and who was now coming back from Borstal four months sooner than he had reckoned on, the governor having made him this rebate in acknowledgment of his having always returned with the gang when the whistle was blown and never tried to escape." Still Alicia will be deeply grieved to part with the girl, who, for telling a lie to a dun or obtaining the cash for a snide cheque, hasn't her equal in the N.W. district, Alicia says.

Is there any likelihood, I wonder, of your meeting dear Grace Romer? If so, dear, will you please tell her that I will be home again by Saturday week, when I will go straight round to Madame Juliaranne's and put a brick through her window. Perhaps I ought to tell you that Grace is "out after" an exceedingly oofy widower, and, having the misfortune to be physically without form and void, as it says in the Scriptures, was advised by me to try one of Juliaranne's patent Parisian self-heaving busts,

of which she now writes to me, complaining bitterly. She says that on her way to Kempton Park races last Saturday, whither the callow widower was escorting her, the bust left its moorings and began to descend inside her upper under-garments. This, as she observes, was vexing enough, especially as widowers, who, like new babies, are all tears for the first six months, but then begin to notice things, cast unpleasant glances as the *embongpong* got lower, and Grace only averted a possible final catastrophe by getting out at Clapham Junction under the pretence of buying the *Star* to consult "Captain Coe," and bribing the engine-driver into giving her a couple of handfuls of cotton-waste from the hot box of the locomotive to fill out the aching void. Fortunately the afternoon was cool, and, as the widower slipped himself rather unreservedly at Mr Bertram's old Scotch, he got much warmer than the cotton-waste at the finish, so that nothing was noticed. All the same, I consider that, setting "ticks" on one side, Madame Juliaranne owes me an explanation, she having distinctly lumbered our mutual friend on to a last-season's bust, and a defective one at that. Grace tells me, by the way, that her action for slander and aspersion

of character against those hotel people is to come on very soon. I don't know whether you remember the incident, but it arose through her missing her last train to Brighton, when, being compelled to spend the night in town, she drove down to the Splendide in a hansom. The clerk must have taken her for quite a vile creature, for he said that he didn't let rooms to "ladies who were alone." I daresay they have to be very strict, and possibly this is the reason why so many men, who are tender-hearted and noble in every way, go about late at night in the hope that they may be of use to those of the opposite sex who are crushed and lonely, and need some great strong man upon whom to lean, and in whom they can place their trust; but this sort of sentiment cuts no ice with Grace, who has instructed her solicitor to go barefisted for the company, and to stick to 'em like a sick kitten to a hot brick.

Since you solicit my opinion on one or two other points on which you say you're sick with anxiety, I may tell you that you acted most erroneously in calling Lady D.'s attention to the dead oyster which you nearly swallowed at her table. The cultured guest, on making such a discovery, temporarily screens the lower part of

the face by raising the serviette and allows the unsound bivalve to drop from the lips to the ground, just outside the right foot, covering the fishmonger's mistake at leisure by working the rejected oyster into the fabric of the carpet by means of the shoe heel. With regard to the Court gown down the front of which your aunt spilt the shandygaff on her way back from the last Drawing-Room, and which you now wish to turn into a portière, you had better wait and show it to me on my return ; but precisely what it is that you complain of with your tom cat I cannot decipher : you *do* write so indistinctly. As far as *I* can unravel it he is "missing," but Charlie, to whom I have submitted your letter, unhesitatingly evolves "missising" out of your illegible scrawl. If the former, endeavour to recover by advertising, and ~~then~~ well butter its feet. Cooking or kitchen butter will do.—Thine dearest,

MAUDE.

SEPTEMBRE

IN THE ISLAND OF WALCHEREN

THURSDAY.

DEAREST MADGE,—

Writing is like flirting, dear Isabel Carnaby declares—if you can't do it, nobody can teach you to do it; and if you can do it, nobody can keep you from doing it. That is why, seated at a little iron table on the verandah of the beautiful Bath Hotel at Flushing—or Vlissingen, as it is called here—I am, though positively sizzling in the sun, going to set down for your edification the story of our sudden flight across the North Sea, which I am sure you must be dying to hear. To begin with, dear, London was fast becoming quite impossible. It was bad enough to find the dear old Exhibition almost entirely given over to the aristocracy of Fried Fish Place, Aldgate, and to the positively dreadful and wholly inexcusable class,

who, at the mere sound of the popping of a wine cork on the Welcome lawn, would stand on their chairs and rubberneck, in make-believe that they could whiff the date of the vintage; but when our Yankee cousins so preponderated at the Cecil (where we had been staying while my flat was re-decorated), that the bar-tender frowned if one ordered any but American drinks, Charlie and I elected to "cl'ar out" with the celerity of the Evil One belabouring tanbark. How *do* the cheese-coloured cusses from the States surround those awful "mixed drinks" as they do? Do you know, dear, I was persuaded one afternoon to try an "Oom-Paul-swizzle," and, after getting back to my room with the greatest difficulty, I could do nothing else all the evening but sit and gaze insanely at the big electric light in the forecourt, which looked for all the world to me like the spirit photograph of a giant pumpkin swinging in eternal space.* Objects seemed to multiply themselves in the most bewildering manner, too; indeed I could think of nothing but the low racing man, dreadfully intoxicated, in the pit at the old Adelphi, who, at a most affecting juncture in the second act of *The Two Orphans*, hiccupped loudly, and bellowed to his chum:

"J'yer, Bill, how many ruddy orphans can *you* see?"

And, what was more, Poor Charlie was fully as bad. He took a "Riley Grannan mixed ginger" and a "Webster Davis peach gurgler," and, at the spot where he first hit the wood pavement outside, he left an impression considerably deeper than himself. He told me next morning he felt sicker than at being left at the post on a take-five-to-two shot, whatever that may be.

To begin at the beginning, dear, do you remember an ingenuous little puss called Dolly Fielder, who first wore grease-paint in the dear *Old Guard*? Alas! how many fond mothers who allowed their daughters to go on the stage in the comparative security of comic opera, have since regretted those halcyon days! Anyway, three weeks ago, Dolly was on her way to fulfil an engagement in a *tingel-tangel* at Berlin, when, aboard the night-boat to Flushing, she met the distinguished Dutch nobleman—the Comte de Tochas—who has since become her husband. Their extremely short courtship was most romantic; for the first thirty miles out from Port Victoria they were sea-sick together, and for the remaining ninety-five he was assisting her

to return her straying tresses to her invisible hair-net. Struck by Dolly's beauty, and, in short, finding himself in the familiar "guess-if-I-don't-somebody-else-will" position, the Comte declared his passion. Mutual confidences were indulged in (though Dolly naturally made no mention of her little boy—her "first offence" as she loves to call him), and the Count readily accounted for his whole life ever since he got too big to sleep with his parents. He comes from one of the very oldest families extant—indeed, his original ancestor assisted Adam in naming the *fauna* of Palestine, and used to throw stones at the Callaghans and Sullivans as they swung from bough to bough and branch to branch, sometimes holding by their paws and sometimes by their tails, in their native jungles. On reaching Flushing at six in the morning—of course I allude to Dolly and her Comte, not to the Callaghans and Sullivans—they had a hasty little breakfast of schijldpadsoep and varkenskarbomade at the big, ever-empty restaurant in the railway-station, after which the Comte got a shave, changed the ends on his cuffs, pared his nails, bought a halfpenny cigar, and was sitting on the Consul's doorstep to be married when the legation opened for the day.

And now they have settled down here in a pretty little whitewashed house on the road to Veere—which the Boers call Vera—with evergreen trees in front of it, and a Dutch wind-pump and a kitchen froggery or water-garden, behind. Here, in a pond all cat-tail reeds and clumps of *fleur-de-lys*, and lily-pods and bunches of the great Egyptian lotus, the frogs play an unending game of "I spy Skinner in the doorway!" with the gentle storks, by popping up in odd places and singing snatches of symphonies and part-songs, and then diving suddenly out of sight. There is one big, old, green fellow in particular, with a low register that would make his fortune, if only he could be brought to London in the smoking-concert season. We have named him "Charlie Manners," from his habit of suddenly appearing on the frond of a huge pond-lily and giving off the last bar of "The Diver" in a much deeper, grander, and lower key than any merely human voice could attain. Altogether—as I remarked to Charlie, as we shared a seat in the rattling old stoom-tram this morning with a middle-aged frau, who was carrying a large black-currant bush under one arm, and a new-born calf under the other—there is quite an engaging simplicity about these

quaint, out-of-date, human back-numbers, which I may beautifully illustrate by retailing the little story, which is inscribed in Hebrew characters on a tablet inserted into the wall of a fearfully old dwelling in the Jewish quarter. Its antique fire-places, obsolete ceilings, and particularly its old mullioned sashes, still with rude scrawls all over the glass, recalled how Francis the First scratched his famous message on a window-pane of the Castle of Chambord ; how Doctor Johnson was called great after engraving some poetry with a diamond ring on a lattice in a country hostelry ; also how, in much later times, poor Hughie, for doing the self-same thing on a South-Western Railway train window—a merry little jingle beginning, “There was an old man of Calcutta”—was brought up at a police court and fined five pounds.

The legend was mainly of a certain beautiful Jewess called Esther van Winkel, at the time of whose entry into life and Dutch Judaism some wise woman* or soothsayer, who clearly had been expecting the event, predicted with truly bovine gravity that the young one was destined to enter into matrimony at a phenomenally youthful age. Hereupon a deal of unpleasant Dutch-Hebrew abuse—veritable verbal dead-

cottage—was showered upon the hag by all who reckoned themselves to be within earshot of the disappointed parents (who had burned nine tapers continuously for nine months in the hope of a boy), and she was turned from the doors without the customary dole of peiepskincken and Kabeljauw well-loved beyond the Zuyder Zee; but, twelve years later, all who saw the now tall and beautiful Esther, with her great brown eyes and her full crimson lips, entering the shidduch - maker's office by the side door, shook their heads as they remembered the old dame's words, and wondered which three of their young men Fraulien van Winkel would eventually prove contented with.

“Een guelder on signin' de register, ma tear, an' een guelder vhen suited,” said the venerable matrimonial agent, adding, from force of habit, “Please leaf carte-de-visite, vvhich neet nod pe recent——”

But his formula stopped, as his 'eyes rested on his charming customer. As his orbs of vision took an instantaneous catalogue of the delicious morsel of femininity standing before his counter, his old blood almost grew lukewarm again, and he rubbed the bony structures of his hands together, till they emitted small sparks.

"To dee hoongry no pread is dry," said he; "bot for so peautiful a madchen as yourselluf, ma tear, where shall I find a suitable barty?"

"That's *your* piece-of-pigeon, not mine," replied the beautiful young girl, with an irresponsible laugh, "and, if you think you can expedite matters by having the brace down now, why I'll pay it. But I want a bit of class, understand—a bit of *class*. I don't profess to be squeamish, but fruiterers, fishmongers, cash-tailors, music-hall-agents, and lottery syndicate-sharps are barred. There's your fee; I'm on your books for three days, and if I don't hear from you by then, I shall conclude that all your clients need galvanising. So long!"

It was on the second day after this, that the shidduch-maker sent to Esther to say that he had found her a highly-desirable choson; also that he must have nine guelders more for his fee, since the bridegroom-elect was willing to take the bride absolutely without portion or dowry whatsoever. In a burst of virtuous indignation, Esther replied that she did not wish to mate with a fool of a Christian; but the marriage-maker assured her that the bidder for her hand was not only a Jew, but most devout, and one who wouldn't even take a

cough-drop without laying tephillin. The youth, he said, was much engrossed in his books, and was pregnant with a great theory (the exact nature of which he was not at liberty to mention), which, in the fulness of time would take shape and bring its promulgator great fame and glory, so that his name should be on people's tongues even further off than Harlingen. So, without courtship or canoodling of any kind, Esther van Winkel and Solomon Stoomtomp stood with joined hands beneath the canopy of the chuppa, and Solomon, with the clogged toe of his right boot delicately snapped the stem of the wine-glass placed upon its side at his feet, and they were married. Esther was an Ischto.

But, at the end of the first week, the beautiful Ischto went to her mother in tears. Her husband did nothing, night nor day, but read his books; he had not sung to her, as any well-regulated Yiddisher bridegroom should, "Lacho dowde, likras chala"—"Come, my beloved." • Not once in eight whole days had he kissed her! With the celerity which marks the coming of the superfluous and meddlesome fire-engine when the burning property is more than satisfactorily covered by insurance, old Frau van Winkel—Esther's justly indignant mamma—brought her

fool son-in-law before the Rav. Now the Rav was young for a Rav, and, in more ways than one, a bit of a Solomon. He did not take his eyes off Esther during the whole time her mother was upbraiding the recalcitrant. Then the bashful bridegroom spoke in his own defence. What was it that was expected of him more than he had done, he asked? He had bought new clothes, new ear-rings and trinkets for his bride; he had got up o' mornings (since they kept no shiksa) and boiled the coffee, he had neglected his studies to cut the matsakleise—what in heaven's name else did she want?

"I will tell you, son," said the rabbi, softly, "she is pining to be kissed. He who never ventures will never cross the sea; take her home and kiss her!"

Solomon Stoomtomp seemed thujnderstruck. And not less thujnderstruck than horrified. Ever a bookish lad, he had never given a thought to any kind of vanity, and he had no notion of the way to go to work. He frankly owned as much. He was willing enough; but how should he start about the business.

"Perchance," said mischievous old Mother van Winkel, wetting the second and third fingers of her right hand, and twisting tighter the curi

that stood out in front of her right ear, "perchance his reverence would not object to show you?"

So the priest, with the young husband's consent, raised the bride's veil, and gazed for an instant on her downcast eyes and flushed and velvety cheeks. Then, encircling her waist with his left arm, he brought his lips to hers, and kept them there, till a slight sound, like the faint echo of a porous plaster losing its last hold, told that the act of osculation was completed.

The choson expressed his gratitude, the old woman curtsied her thanks, and the party passed out of the doorway. It was whilst the young rabbi, with a high colour in his cheeks and a very unparsonic light in his eyes, was rubbing with his handkerchief at the slight blotch of *blanc de perle* on the left shoulder of his sable vestments, that the bridegroom reappeared, somewhat out of breath with running.

"Pardon, mynheer, pardon," he begged, "but I have already forgotten part of the ceremony. After raising her veil—er—what then?"

"O dullard!" cried the rabbi, "and must I give you *another* lesson? Well, well—go and fetch her back then!"

With a national literature abounding in these

crude instances, the Dutch maiden's imagination is allowed to lie completely dormant ; quite useless would it be to advise the fraulein who has erred to take a pointer from the English girl in tears, who, being reproached by her anguished father with regard to her condition, said that her trouble all came about through reading in *The Gentlewoman* that kissing was a sure cure for freckles ; I do assure you, dear, the Boer maiden could not possibly realise it—the fictional part, I mean, naturally. And, oh Madge ! you *should* see their grotesque babies ! They are the most ludicrous reproductions of ridiculous parents one could possibly imagine—though I daresay they look well enough in Dutch eyes ; doubtless the adult wiggle-waggle in the horsepond thinks the baby wiggle-waggle the sweetest thing out. If we were to devote to the mating of men and women only one-tenth part of the discrimination and judgment we give to the breeding of the thoroughbred horse, or even the hackney, we might be something to be proud of, instead of running risks, such as did my friend, little Major Murgatroyd, who, roaming half-clothed about the jungle, somewhere up the Congo, got his life nearly pounded out of him by a big brunette gorilla with a huge *lignum vitæ* club, not because

the animal had any grudge against the Major, but purely because it mistook him for a hated rival suitor for the hand of a certain blonde young gorillaess which had given it some encouragement at a recent cocoanutting.

Do you remember the story, dear, of the tired-out youth in the boat, who called out to the bargee in the passing tug, "Ai say, will you tow me behind?" And the bargee, supposing the young fellow to have grown numb from sitting, or thinking perhaps he was doing penance over some odd election bet, replied, with a grin and a glance at his right boot, "All right, mate, pull in to the bank an' I'll do it just for the bloomin' fun o' the thing!" Well, Madge, *I* felt very nearly angry enough to ask somebody to kick *me* yesterday morning, when I got a note from young Bantam de Bleys, announcing his mad marriage to that shocking Irene Warner, principally, it would seem from his letter, because "she was always such a nice, quiet little girl"! Great Coram Street! Why, as long as ten years ago, dear, that "nice, quiet little girl" had, to my certain knowledge, a flat in Gower Gardens, a wine tick with poor old Sam Adams at the Trocadéro, a standing advertisement in *The Era*, and a great ugly brute of a male man

as big as Brixton, who regularly "drowed her celery," as he himself expressed it, whenever she did an early turn at a music-hall. Sometimes I positively sit aside, and seriously wonder in which direction are we drifting—are women increasing in shrewdness or men in anserous gullibility?

Now, mind you write soon, dear, or, better still, take a little holiday. and run over. You would find quite an engaging quaintness about this old-world island and its vagrant people with the grotesque morals—indeed, if Charlie can only persuade the Comte de Tochas to oblige him with his name on the back of a bill—a name, Charlie declares, which could hardly fail to prove a pleasing novelty to the Hebrews—we may prolong our stay, when, dearest, I will write again, and tell you all about the *fauna* and *flora*, as well as the *sans culottes* and *canaille*, or razzle-dazzle population of L'Ile de Walcheren.

Oh, by the way : with regard to the black silk skirt which you say was "simply ruined" by the eggs you incurred whilst reciting your revolutionary poem at the social-democrats' entertainment. You can only try what a thorough washing with ammonia in solution will do. Remove the stains as quickly as possible with a clean sponge, after which dry the skirt in front of a

quick fire. I warned you of what would happen, dear, if you insisted before these persons—who, whatever their views, are not necessarily uneducated—in speaking of the Tsar's "bomb-infested throne" in such a way as to infer that the Tsar kept his seat continuously. Still, persevere with the *ammonitions*

Ever your loving cousin,

MAUDE

OCTOBER

CLACHANBRAE, GLENGAFRE,
THURSDAY.

MY DEAREST MADGE,—

I certainly cannot agree with you that the fact of us both being in Scotland in September is “as odd as the droll old mismated feet we stand on”; I think it is a very ordinary coincidence. I might go further, and say that the person who cannot appreciate a Highland shooting-lodge in the early autumn does not know enough to carry viscera to a plantigrade—*id. est*: a bear. Pray, child, what can favourably compare with a day in the heather and life-giving air of the old granite world? The substantial breakfast of hashed game and “one pint, one little pint,” the drive to the shoot with the Highland groom (who, judged by his general air, is also the Highland hostler); the lunch by the mountain stream, where lurks the thyme-

scented grayling (for the salmon has now ceased to rise when addressed, but keeps his seat at the bottom of the river); the crack of the gun, and the astonished shout as you catch your toe in a heather tussock, and ballast a keeper with birdshot—did not your host remind you at starting that *everything* was “*in*,” adding, “Blaze away at anything that rises: you can’t bag a thing that ain’t in season in October”; the prolonged dinner and burgundy-subdued “music” to follow; the much-needed, virtuous repose between lavender-scented sheets—what do these things *not* mean to lovers of nature and—old vintages? Oh, no, Madge, we—that is we who have elevated visiting and saving board to the level of the higher arts—can never afford to decline an invitation to join a shooting party at a *small* place—small I say advisedly, because, if otherwise, and there are many servants to tip, hospitality and the swagger hotel have mighty little between them. It is because it seldom shoots, dear, that our sex does not more fully appreciate Scotland. If only ladies would take to the gun when in the North, they would enjoy their sojourn more; so, I am persuaded, would the merry brown birds. Then, too, there are the dogs—the dear, delightful dogs. It is only

in Scotland that the collie—like the cow in the East, the stork in Holland, or the cunning little piglet in Erin—is thoroughly appreciated and communed with: out of Scotland it is *so* different. I remember a friend of mine who, to gain some real or fancied benefit from the Emperor of China, once sent the eccentric ruler of the Middle Kingdom a beautiful collie-dog from Mr Scruffs' odoriferous show, paying one hundred pounds for the animal, and goodness only knows how much for the little boy messenger, who took it to Peking. Well, several weeks after the little fellow had dumped the canine down in North China, got his docket initialed by the Dowager-Empress, and returned to receive the leather medal of the small-boy service, the donor himself pulled the bell-wire at the Emperor's gate, and was received and disinfected by Chen Lien Fang.

In due course he was ushered into the presence of the great little sovereign, and, falling on his knees, and making the customary kow-tows as he crawled across the floor, he ventured to inquire: "Oh, Son of Heaven and Joy of my Liver, Illustrious Regulator of the Planetary System, how did you like the purp?"

"Fact is," replied the Emperor, setting aside

for once the restraints and limitations imposed by court etiquette, "we get a surfeit of dog-meat here; but it looked plump, and I'm told they enjoyed it in the kitchen. What?"

But the donor, with his hat in one hand and his stomach in the other, was already bowing himself out.

We are an exceedingly merry party here, though, seeing that the host and hostess are but recently married, the bachelor element certainly predominates; still, Sir Andrew is vigilantly observant, and spares no pains to let each fresh male arrival see how very proficient he is with firearms, even going to the trouble of having an empty ale barrel set rolling down the hillside and putting a pistol-ball clean in at the bung every time the hole comes round. This accounts, I think, for the reserve which comes over the younger men in the drawing-room after dinner. They sit aside with the whisky decanter and grow politer and politer—and politer still—as the evening wears on, till, last night, when our charming hostess took her seat at the piano, and asked one of the boys, ever so sweetly, if he would mind turning over for her, he approached, with uncertain step, and a perfectly imbecile smile, and acquiesced so literally that

he turned over not only the leaves but the music-stool and his hostess on it, as well as a *nouveau-art* hammered-brass palm-stand and a Sheraton curio table absolutely laden with priceless china treasures. Poor Maisie shed tears over the wreck of her pretty things, though she unselfishly laid the whole blame on her husband and his jealousy, which, combined, had completely unnerved the boy. "It really does seem," she told me between her sobs, upstairs, "that I cannot be handed to the piano nor have the smallest thing passed to me save by a caddie or a sheep-dog." Is not it ridiculous? If all married men were so absurdly watchful, whatever would become of dear Bohemia? But he has always been the same. Even on her wedding day, so Maisie says, he would not permit a soul to salute her, until she had filled her mouth as full of wedding cake as it would hold and then lowered her veil. Then again, there went away from here in a fearful hurry just after breakfast this morning; one of the nicest men that ever committed a *faux pas*—for one should not be too critical: the sun himself has spots, which heighten rather than decrease his effulgence—and, if ever I beheld a man suffering from shock to the system, it was he. Maisie, it appears,

had on the previous evening presented him, in all pureness of heart, with a Kruger gold coin, and this he had dropped into one of the four pockets of his dress waistcoat. Many hours later, as he went to bed in the dark (the last candlestick having gone before him), he encountered, in an upper passage, Felice, Maisie's maid, and, there and then, having taking a great deal of whisky—a certain quantity he was compelled to take, he said, in order to cut away "internal sandbars," formed by long residence in Egypt, and so save himself from "running aground"—he drew her aside, and forcibly kissed her. As a salve to her conscience, probably, Felice slapped his face, whereupon he slipped a sovereign into her hand, telling her to buy gloves with it, after which he went to bed—the very best place for him, I think. Well, early in the morning, just about the time that smiling morn stood on tiptoe to greet Glengarry from across the Grampians, Felice brought to her mistress a Kruger gold piece, saying that her sweetheart, who was serving with Duckett's Dum-Dum Dodgers in South Africa, had sent it to her from Pretoria. Though Maisie shrewdly guessed the truth, she held her tongue, and gave her maid a sovereign for the coin, and there

Felice doubtless thought the matter ended. A little later on, however, when breakfast was over, and the dreadful Sir Andrew had taken the latest visitor out to the mountain to show him the ale-barrel, Maisie buttonholed the Anglo-Egyptian, and, pressing the Kruger piece into his palm, the while she gazed straight into his astonished eyes, she said, quietly :

"Here is your coin again, Major, though you don't deserve it."

"G-g-good Heaven, Lady Maisie!" gasped the wretched warrior, shaking all over so violently that three of his teeth fell out upon the hearthrug, "You don' m-m-mean to s-s-say it was *you*?"

But Maisie's only response was a merry, ringing laugh, and, seven minutes later, with only half his luggage and with neckties and golf stockings hanging from his imperfectly-packed portmanteaux, the Major was driving helter-skelter to the railway station, having left his apologies for Sir Andrew, and the explanation that he had been suddenly called upon by wire and the War Office to join Sir Claude Macdoodle's forces, engaged in suppressing a native rising at Ghargaroo, Central Africa, before nightfall.

Mentioning Central Africa, dear, do you remember my telling you of poor Harold Osborne,

who went out to Alligator Creek, in Old Calabar, some three or four years ago, and married the daughter of a great chief; she was a little maiden called Y'm (which, in the native dialect means "Can-take-as-much-cuddling-as-a-wooden-leg-will stand-poulticing") — can you recollect him? Alas! he is no more. Once too often did he adventure into that dreadful Congou; and the gentlemanly-young Niger Protectorate officer, who was the last white person to see him, and who gave me the harrowing *viva voce* description of his untimely ending, did not even know the name of the unfriendly chieftain who ate him. But it is quite commonly known, he says, that many of these polite but inexorable cannibals have large quantities of the bluest of British blood running in them. Harold always had a great idea of finding himself with his head and hands loose (as he used to put it, poor fellow!) amongst the Brass tribes, who dwell in that pleasant land beyond the difficult-to-navigate and frequently fatal Financial Straits. These presented little or no difficulty to Harold, however. He was well acquainted with every shoal and quicksand on the big wall-chart, from up where the dusky Laplander drinks his oil and rubs his stomach with the heeltap, down to where the sullen and morose Maori boomerangs

his surprised foe beneath the Southern Cross. So Harold got there; and, although there is not much for a doctor to do in a land where a small green turtle, a human kidney, and a cocoanut will support an entire family for a week, he had the great good luck, within an hour of landing, to steer up against a native small-pox epidemic, and in one day alone he vaccinated three hundred of Mbwmpa's wives and followers—including about three-score of the wives' followers—from a single threepenny-halfpenny tin of Nestle's milk. For this service Mbwmpa had made "the great white medicine man" the head of a tribe on the spot, and had also given him three beautiful seal-brown Adamaowa girls to do what he liked with—altho', making every allowance for a stranger's ignorance, Mbwmpa had thrown out a hint to the effect that the general practice was to espouse only two of the squaws, and "beef down" the third to eat during the honeymoon. Though Mbwmpa, my Protectorate boy said, had crude and nebulous ideas of what was beyond the "big water," and had cordially hated the whites ever since, as a young man, he went down the Benin River with a flatboat full of banyans and nut oil, and sold his cargo to a certain Captain Criterion, who bought the whole consignment, and agreed to meet

Mbwmpa later "in the third creek up from Sapele " with a " Noah's ark full of ruddy broad-cloth," but had not been seen again during twenty-three years—he was quite an advanced old savage, and was tattooed from head to foot in neat designs culled mostly from the trousseaux advertisements in the ladies' papers which, from time to time, were washed up on the beach. He was a reformer in his way, and something of an experimentalist, too, for, amongst the comparative yokels from up the Gambia he was ever ready to wager that, whenever he yearned for an exchange of smoking tobacco, or funny stories, or languished for a "peg" of absinthe, he could always bring a gunboat's crew ashore quicker by disembowelling a few missionaries than by using the costly flag-signalling apparatus, which had been furnished him as a subsidised, but unarmed, ally.

But Harold Osborne's prosperity did not last long. His afternoon calls at the kraals during the absence of the great hunters got talked about, and soon were regarded as evidencing a too-ready predilection to err. Many a savage lord came back to his mud-hut from the village palaver of an evening inwardly boiling, and, instead of sitting quietly down and tackling his cold flesh banquet, with gusto, would cast his

flashing eyes over his five-and-twenty blushing wives and demand, in tones of devilish cynicism, "Mikki-mikki, sooksook, mikki?" (How long's your dough-coloured friend been gone, anyway?) Finally, one too-indulgent chief said to another, "Medicine-man or no medicine-man, what's the matter with handing him one?"; and thereafter my smart little informant tried, as hard as he knew how, to locate Harold, and warn him that he had reached the limit. He was, in fact, actually on his way to the surgery-compound, when he suddenly beheld a strange sight. The painted rush-matting, hanging across the door of a great chief's bungalow in the King's Row, was torn hastily aside to allow of a big, tousled lump of humanity being shot out into the roadway, with all the velocity of a nine-pound shell leaving a naval gun. The human projectile had so much impetus behind it that, clearing the eighteen or twenty fattening Michaelmas dogs that lay sleeping around the entrance, it hurtled swiftly across the open space, and, with a loud crash, took down the residence of Old-Tadpole-with-a-jag-on, who was sitting indoors with his tepee off, whittling himself a new medicine whistle out of the left fibula of the late little Pig-eye Petey, the papoose who had drawn the black bean to furnish

the *plat du jour* at the Running Elk Cinderella on the previous Tuesday. As the fired one arose from the tent ruins and pressed his right eye back into its socket, it was seen to be Harold, but, oh *so* battered, *so* crushed, *so* mutilated! He had been coarsely scalped—evidently with the large stone adze locally known as the “correspondent swatter”—and the quivering edges of the recently-severed flesh puckered and trembled on the pinky-blue frontal bone of the skull. Blood flowed copiously from both eyes, and, bubbling down to meet the tributaries issuing from the nostrils, clotted and amassed on poor Harold’s blonde moustache like the falls of a crimson Niagara in winter. Many other injuries he had, from a pulverized proboscis to a lacerated Adam’s apple, but all that he said as he hobbled away with his face in one hand and his slashed abdominal region in the other, was:

“Great Caesar’s Ghost! And they told me he’d gone to Squatawottomy to see a man about an elephant!”

No doubt existed, my informant added, that, from the direction he had taken, Harold would soon fall in with the merciless Skunkatunks, and be readily eaten, since that tribe was then known (in the “close” season for all other jungle game)

to have been living on its own attenuated debtors and criminals for many moons past.

And now, dear, I must draw my epistle to a close, for having ascertained that we are to be given a haggis, followed by a blackberry pudding, for dinner, Charlie and I are going to hire a boat and sail about Loch Rannoch until bed-time. Nevertheless, I really must find time to tell you that you were guilty of a positively dreadful breach of etiquette in saying what you did at the matutinal mustering of your Highland party the other morning. Your never having seen the laird in a kilt and sporran before makes not the slightest difference in the gravity of your truly terrible error: what they must have thought of you when, in "a chickaleary tone," as you put it, you greeted your host with, "What-ho! This is where I draws the line at goin' a-bird's-nestin'!" heaven only knows, for *I* certainly do not. But you need have no doubts as to whether you will be included in the house party *next* autumn!

Lamenting the family ties between us, I am still your cousin,

MAUDE.

NOVEMBRE

MOUNT STREET MANSIONS,
THURSDAY.

DARLING LITTLE MADGE,—

You really *must* forgive me, dearest, if, as you say, my last epistle to you seemed “unnecessarily harsh and acrimonious.” I did not intend it to be so, dear, but even as I wrote it my pretty new flat was on fire, and a number of expressions may have crept in that were intended only for the firemen. So please overlook any profane or unkind terms that may have wounded you, little one, as I really was not cool, though three hoses from leading West End stations and the manual from St James’ Vestry, were playing on at me at the time.

I wonder what you will say when I tell you that Hilda Porter has got a baby? Probably you will put it down as a statement to be handled with hooks, but it is absolutely veracious, and

really the inducements held out to young married ladies by large firms of advertisers nowadays are well nigh incredible. Almost before the ink was dry on the *Morning Post* containing the advt. of the wee dainty stranger's arrival, the big business houses had weighed in with parcels of safety pins, baby ear-caps, yarn wristlets, whalebone stay-busks, waterproof crape, wart caustics, pink pills, poems on golden womanhood, embonpoint remedies, butter-muslin pyjamas, cot trimmings, chicken-meal soap, chair mirrors, table jellies, Torchon veinings, rubber-stocking supporters, tails and coils, coloured insertions, malted extract, hair wavers, "Cheese-It" tabloids, beauty cream, syrup of figs, hygienic cigarettes, and boot elevators—to such an extent that Hilda was enabled to stock an entire stall at the military bazaar in aid of the maimed and mangled warriors of Splogget's South African Horse, the corps which her repulsively ugly brother joined last winter after being told that to get disfigured would improve his appearance.

Though Freddie and Hilda are simply in raptures over their pug-nosed brat, and can already see in it a marked resemblance to several persons on both sides of the house—and especially to a certain wealthy aunt (who, Charley says,

is "positively *ill with it*"), on whom they seem to think they have an air-tight cinch—its face, somehow, reminds me of a dream I had once when a child at school, after having roast hedgehog and hot butter-milk for supper in the long dormitory. Although the baby was only two days old when I saw it, the gold ribbon and pink tulle *choux* in my pretty new pink felt hat, must have awakened the ancestral brute which is ever strong and alert in the young of our species, for the horrid little thing grabbed one bow, and I had to stick my nails into its biceps and nip it quite viciously before I could induce it to drop my precious millinery, already within a few inches of its slavering gums. It certainly did cry a good deal; but Hilda quieted it with an opiate for, as she says, it looks prettiest when asleep, and anyhow, it had to be chloroformed, as the young man from Alfred Ellis'—a most civil young man, with burnt umber hands and saffron finger nails, fading away, possibly, to deeper chemical shades up towards his shoulder blades—had just come to photograph it in its bassinette, a perfect Cupid's bower, all wreathed in tissue-paper honeysuckles. Hilda is having baby's photograph taken every afternoon at three, as she says it will be so interesting in after years

to look back and see how the darling progressed from day to day. As Hilda hopes to be seen back in the Row again by the end of the week, Freddie has bought her an exquisitely tasteful new riding habit of pastel *bleu* cloth, with three-quarter length skirt, and trousers with a broad gold braid down the side of the limb, and a gold cord and tassels over the pistol pocket; and, as you may remember, dear, Hilda has the symmetrical limb which only those who have discarded the habit of draping the adiposity over the patella and taken to the suspender, can ever hope to show.

Speaking of only children, dear, do you remember the pure young son of the pure, but oofy, old lady in Bryanston Square, whom Cordelia Greensills married and took for a honeymoon to Switzerland a fortnight ago? Cordelia had always longed, she told me, to have a boy's first love, and this young he-virgin had been so carefully brought up that he could not wear patent-leather boots in the daytime without stepping a bit higher than usual, like a blind horse. From Victoria Station until tickets were inspected at Neuchatel, he only once took his arm from around her waist, she said, and that was when she went to the stewardess's cabin aboard

the boat to see what had won the two o'clock race at Manchester. Unfortunately, whilst Cordelia was dressing for dinner at the hotel at Berne, her boy bridegroom—her dew-laden daisy!—felt extremely, not to say fearfully thirsty, and rigidly eschewing wine-lists and knowing but little more of “minerals,” he was advised by the sordid Swiss courier (whom, in his boyish innocence, he had tipped inadequately) to try a big bottle of Hunyadi Water.

Poor Cordelia never saw her laddie lover more; by the time she came down dressed for dinner, he had, alas! been quarantined.

Speaking of hasty and imprudent marriages, by the way, all the men in their clubs are laughing immoderately over the “ghastly shlemozzle,” as Charlie calls it, at Clackmannan Castle the other day when the headstrong young Viscount Glenalmond took his music-hall bride home for presentation to his lady mother, the Dowager Duchess of Perthshire. As ‘I. daresay you remember, the Viscount corked himself, socially, by madly marrying one of “the Charming Sisters Meadowsweet,” from the halls—“Gertrude the Gonoph” this one’s associates called her—and on the same day he wrote to his mamma announcing his intention of bringing the new

Viscountess to Clackmannan, concluding his letter with :

“ Have the goodness to make some outward show of extending a welcome to Gertrude—stir up the tenantry, decorate the walls, windows, and entrances, and oblige me by generally endeavouring to make her feel that she is quite at home.”

Decorate the windows and entrances the Dowager Duchess most distinctly did, but it is extremely doubtful whether her manner of doing so made the fair Gertrude (who is really a magnificent animal, with milk-white skin, red hair, and a voluptuous figure), feel “quite at home,” seeing it consisted in having the ground floor windows of the old castle set out with haddocks and kippers, and dishes of uncooked eggs-and-bacon, and the outside lamp whitened and inscribed in bold black letters :—



Was it not *loathsome* of Her Grace?

And yet, somehow, Madge, this leads me to enquire if you have ever paused and considered how very few really first-class hotels now extend a warm welcome to guests who are unaccompanied by luggage—as many newly married couples are bound to be in this impetuous age of meeting at one moment and mating at the next? It is, I am fully persuaded, almost impossible for such pairs to find lodgings which are at all in keeping with their social position, a fact which sometimes leads to the most ridiculous situations. For instance, poor dear old Arthur lately met and married a perfectly charming young Parisienne, but inasmuch as he had not been to his rooms for two whole days, whilst mademoiselle's registered portmanteaux had not yet arrived from Newhaven, they were quite without luggage of any kind.

Foreseeing the difficulties which would certainly arise, and it being already so late in the evening that most of the shops were shut, Arthur—always so resourceful!—conceived the brilliant idea of driving to his club and borrowing the bag of any member who had died or disappeared recently, from Butcher, the night porter—for the night-porter at the Author's Club is more

like a watchful, considerate friend to the club members than a mere paid servant, in proof of which the poor fellow is rapidly dying of insomnia through sitting up for one and the other who have just gone down to the Strand to see a man.

Now the only bag that Butcher could find was an empty "Gladstone," but Arthur cried, "Oh, what's the odds! Fill it with any old rubbish, Butcher, so long as you make it as heavy as Sunday. Its only mission is to inspire confidence: it isn't going to be opened." So Butcher carried it down stairs, and presently returned with it, stuffed to the full limits of its two straps, and apparently of about the same weight as the kitchen battery which is carried in the rear of an army in the field. With this on the roof, they drove straight away to that palatial *caravanserai*, the Grand Junction Hotel.

Here two gorgeously appressed servitors assisted them to alight and two others conducted them to the bureau, whilst a fifth, bearing the precious valise, stood at a distance which was at once respectful and yet within earshot of the voice of the clerk. This urbane person, who is supposed to be able to read character of all kinds at first sight, assigned them to No. 995, Series

P, to which cheerful but distant eyrie the well-trained luggage-man instantly disappeared, while Arthur and Josephine went to the Renaissance Room to take a light supper before retiring, and give the gentlemanly clerk time to find out for Arthur how the trains went to Chapel-en-le-Frith in the morning.

But why should I fatigue you with details which are, after all, mere trifles? It had, of course, quite escaped poor Arthur's memory, when he entrusted the snide "Gladstone" to the care of the Grand Junction baggage-man, that a good "boots" always unstraps luggage and puts out the guests' nighties on the bed, so you may just judge of the perplexity and embarrassment of the young couple when, on being shown to their room, they beheld the battered old "Gladstone" in two pieces on the carved rosewood port-manteau-stand, and twenty-seven empty whisky bottles laid out all in a row along the snowy marcella quilt! It is perhaps not greatly to be wondered at that the managing-director himself called them at a very early hour in the morning, and begged them to leave before the other guests were stirring, as, during the night, diphtheria, and small-pox, and scarlet-fever had broken out in different parts of the hotel, he said

Do you remember, I wonder, one Henrietta Treadwater, who used to pound the lyre with both fists and then endeavour to inveigle the cultured editor of *The Gentlewoman* to accept the result with a view to publication? Anyway, she recently obtained clerical employment—of a sort—at a School of Penmanship in New Oxford Street, her duties being to keep on shaking the table while new pupils wrote out the sentence “This is a specimen of my handwriting before commencing to take lessons of Mr J. P. Pothook,” but, tiring somewhat of her prosaic environment, and remembering what lots of money dear Mrs Mortimer Toddpush used to make out of short stories, she has taken to writing them, and here is one of her latest, which she calls——

“A RUSTIC ROMANCE.

“EVENING was falling softly over the rustic village of Bunionborough, and the honest peasants, glowing with simplicity and health, were returning from the fields. It was a glorious Utopia to the eye from town, and the atmosphere seemed to reek of ambrosia. As a matter of fact, phthisis and tuberculosis were unknown in Bunionborough, the only persons who ever died there being the *blasé roués* sent down by fashionable physicians when they hadn't enough lung tissue left to bait a microbe trap.

“By the door of a rustic cottage stood a pure and beautiful girl, plainly and simply dressed in white, with a bunch of the blossom of the tomato-salad plant—it had been a damp,

poor summer for flowers—at her breast. A sad and disappointed look in her large brown eyes spoke of a hungering heart within. Why was he late? Had he forgotten their last tryst? It seemed impossible. Love, like hate, always remembers; it is only indifference that forgets.

“Just then the scrunch of an iron-shod heel on the gravel road awoke the slumbering echoes where time and solitude had had it all their own way for centuries, and up from the valley came a tall, handsome young countryman, the very picture of health, in rustic cords and the all-pervading leather leggings. He was the personification of manly beauty, and might have been a Saxon chieftain in the days when our forefathers were savages, with hair upon their hands, arms, feet and breasts, and a religion entirely unfit for publication. He planted a long-pent, languorous kiss on the girl's full, red lips, and asked, in a tone of pained anxiety.

“‘My darling, have you abandoned your rash intention?’

“‘No, Willie, I have not,’ she answered quietly but deliberately. ‘It is impossible for me to pretend to misunderstand the attentions of the vicar any longer, and, as you say you have not the means to marry me, I must turn to the stage. Willingly, cheerfully, would I remain in Bunionborough, but between you and the parson I look like getting joshed at the finish.’

“‘Maggie,’ he cried, in the terrible earnestness of an anguished heart, ‘how do you know that you have the necessary talent?’

“‘Oh, I’ve already been up and had my voice tried,’ she replied, somewhat carelessly.

“‘But, perchance—I only say perchance, my child—you might not succeed,’ and he grew more serious still, ‘and—oh, cursed thought!—would you, would you—starve?’

“‘What’s the matter with the currant buns at Short’s?’ she answered lightly.

“‘Nay, nay,’ he persisted, ignoring her words. ‘Give up

this wild idea of becoming an actress. Write and tell them that you cannot do it. Tell them that your conscience rebels——'

"'Oh, rats!' cried the beauty, pettishly. 'What does a Henrietta Street dramatic agent know about "conscience?" Besides, I've signed my contract——'

"'Cannot you expand it?'

"'To what purpose? To stay here on my aunt's charity, leading a purposeless, monotonous existence, only alleviated by my own useless observations on the curiosities of animal and plant life? No; London is my anchorage, and if the plums of society drama prove too high for my pole, I must slide a little lower and take a swat at the singing soubrette industry!'

"Her lover turned away and gazed across the road. There was a choking sensation as of too much mashed potato in his throat that checked his words. Maggie Riches' face grew a trifle hard, and there was a forced, unnatural ring in her voice as she continued:

"'Don't get pains in the neck on my account, Willie; I shall succeed right enough.'

"He made her no answer. His brain reeled, and he thought only of the legend of Washington Irving, of the times before women brought sadness and responsibility to men; of the discovery of them, living by the side of a primeval lake on a vegetable diet, and of the men running after them like non-paying guests from a burning boarding-house. The meaner a man may be, so far superior does he think himself to the woman he has burdened with his patronage.

"'Come,' said the beautiful girl, noting but not understanding his embarrassment, 'if you care to do me a parting good turn, come and carry my props to the railway station.'"

"Six months had rolled slowly and laboriously over the

rustic village of Bunionborough since the evening when William Whangleathers carried Maggie Riches' box to the station. Occasionally letters came from Maggie, though, as the Governor of North Carolina might have remarked, it was a blamed long time between postal deliveries; and then, too, they were such weird, strange letters, reeking of the new humour and of a world of which William knew nothing. As he read, or occasionally perused, these screeds, his honest mouth would become unclasp'd, just as it was wont to do when he slept on his back in the harvest field, and the conviction would force itself upon his simple mind that whatever else Maggie had achieved in town she had incurred a faculty for erring more promptly than any maiden who had previously migrated from Bunionborough. For there had been others.

"She spoke of 'boys' who 'gave' her lunch, and were 'awfully sweet' when she experienced a 'scarcity of the ready'; and William talked it over with the village postmaster, who also dealt in groceries, patent medicines, boots and shoes, gunpowder, dog-licences, sarsaparilla, sheep dip, and axe helv's, until he brought on a dull aching sensation at the base of what he called his brain. And when, in a *billet* which arrived one Sabbath morning, his erstwhile sweetheart said she supposed he was 'still the giddy village kipper as of old,' he went to church as one in a strange dream and positively skipped one of the Commandments. But she had not failed. Like the fervent and enthusiastic French girl in Sam Pallant's only novel, who came over to England determined to earn a living somehow, she had succeeded. She spoke of the gay frocks she wore, of the floral tributes she received, and of the triumphs she had won. No longer was she Maggie Riches; her signature now was Marguerite Richesse.

"Nevertheless did William's heart sink. Even had Maggie's—for she was still Maggie to him—letters been more ambiguous than they were, he could have read between the lines the great change that had come over her. He doubted whether she

would now—well, say consider it *au fait* to cover her hat feathers with a cotton pocket-handkerchief at the first few spots of rain. He became worried and unsettled about her. And one day, unable to bear it any longer, he journeyed up to London by the mid-day train. He would see her at all cost, he would look upon her face again at least, and if he found her unhappy, or in moral jeopardy, he would try and bring her back.

“Pass we to the last scene.

“In a small, white-washed dressing-room behind the scenes of a gorgeous suburban theatre, a still beautiful woman lay asleep on the threadbare velvet cushions of a settee. It was Maggie, of course. On the wooden dresser, which was round three sides of the apartment, and by the side of a japanned tin make-up outfit stood a three-star Martell bottle. Though the bottle was plumb empty, it wore a triumphant look, and William, who had bribed a gasman with a sovereign to sneak him in past the stage door, noted it all as he proceeded to secrete himself behind a pile of oval, dusty, leather-topped dress boxes that stood in one corner. He had barely done so when the heavy portière of once black cloth which did duty for a door was pulled aside, and a tall good-looking man in evening-dress and a heavily-dyed permanganate-of-potash moustache walked quietly in. It was the lessee. The rush of outside atmosphere caused by his entrance somewhat disturbed the sleeping woman, who, without opening her eyes, yelled out:

“‘Keep that door shut, you gillics! Drink is the foe to sleep, is it? Anyway, I was downstairs this mornin’ five minutes ahead of the bar-tender!’

“The lessee shook his head sadly.

“‘Every single sinker off her balloon,’ he exclaimed, quietly. ‘This Sunday Pullman to Brighton will settle her if she doesn’t stop it. Why is it that the Queen of Watering Places vends such ardent stimulants? Maggie is *always* like this on a

Monday. How truly hath the poet said, "The triumph of the sherbet in the principal is the understudy's opportunity." Where's Miss Buckingboard ?'

"He turned upon his heel and left the dressing-room, and William Whangleathers, with face more pallid than a corpse's, came out from his concealment. He stole on tiptoe to where she who had so recently been his heart's idol lay, whilst his breast was rent by a thousand conflicting emotions. But as Cupid was about to triumph at the sacrifice of common sense—as William was about to lay his right hand upon her arm and his lips upon hers, the head of the bribed gasman popped in and cried, with an air of injury :

"'Hedge a bit, mister, hedge a bit. You said you on'y wanted to *see* 'er; don't go an' 'andle the goods, or you may cost me my billet.'

"So William tore himself away. With the desperation born of a broken heart, and fearing lest he should relent, he went straight to Holborn Viaduct and sank his little wad of eight-and-twenty quid, with which, and a little cottage harmonium he was paying for in fresh eggs, he intended to start house-keeping, in the latest thing in bicycles, and as he had no more idea of riding than a Solomon Islander has of tripe and onions, his broken heart is now the smallest and least significant of his casualties."

THE END

Delightfully romantic, is it not ?

And now, little Miss Ingénue, only fancy your asking such a very artless question as "*did*" we go to the first Covent Garden Ball! Why, St Vitus is our favourite saint, to say nothing of Neil Forsyth. Some of the dresses were *ex-*

tremely good; for instance, Hughie, who had supped at the Tavistock round the corner, and had brought away a bedroom light and some snuffers under his coat, came as the old English king—Alfred, was it not—who kept the time by burning candles and who compelled his subjects to visit the throne at regular periods to set their short sixes by the royal lights. I felt quite sorry when he was turned out for chucking a barmaid under the chin because she refused to serve him, on the grounds that he had had sufficient: as if that man had ever had sufficient! Mrs Terence Wortonhunt's shockingly fast husband brought Letty Bunn from the Gaiety—for Letty is still faithful to him despite the fact, which she told me in confidence, that in the matter of making a girl presents "he is no blooming Parkins and Gotto." Theirs was, if I may use the term, a combined costume, representing "A Red Indian Wedding," Mrs Wortonhunt's husband being "Young-Fellow-Skin-The-B'ar" (a very striking dress, though his mocassins, like his feet, were not mates), whilst Letty was "Dishfaced Dilly, his squaw." He was supposed to have got the maiden dirt cheap for a nickel-plated corkscrew, a quart of rum, and a dog-chain, which Letty carried about the

ballroom, and the costume so pleased the judges that it took the eighth prize, a dozen of silver napkin rings—about as inappropriate a gift as well could be, since, of course, Terence and Letty are not at all likely to have children. Speaking of the man Wortonhunt, his poor wife daily prays for his death, I hear, and no wonder, seeing that his disgusting conduct has nearly lost her the friendship of the big bill-discounter who looks after her theatrical ventures, chooses all her costumes, and, it is whispered, valets her. Still it was all too bad of Wortonhunt, hearing that Madame was in the stalls at the Opera with Monsieur Juggins the J., to go up into the gallery and take up a position which enabled him to keep on spitting on the bald head of his wife's mash until, at last, he drove the pair from the theatre.

But, bless me! how I *am* straying! Ballyhooly Bob was there as a certain half-forgotten Irish nautical person who, early in the century on the coast of Wexford was killed by mistake through wearing a coat and so being taken for a revenue officer, whilst dear Arthur Roberts came as the "King Arthur" who formerly ruled West Wales, or Dumnonia, at the time when civilization was advancing in every direction.

He said he should have liked to complete the impersonation by giving an illustration of "advancing in every direction," but that it made him so bad in the morning, so, after introducing us to his partner—a tall, stately girl with rich Trappiste hair done in Sévigne curls, and looking awfully well, I thought, in an orange-plissed gown of some soft, clingy stuff, the bodice cut with a low heart-shaped decolletage and a girdle of purple panne high above the waist finished off with bunches of the blossoms of the Turkey rhubarb plant towering above rows upon rows of golden baby-ribbon—of whom he spoke as "Rorty Rebecca, the Ratcatcher's Typewriter," he carried her off to supper.

But—there! I cannot pretend even to *allude* to half the striking dresses I noticed, more especially as you wish to know what sort of headgear is being worn in town just now. As it fortunately happens, Dolly Kenwin has just got a trousseau' of hats home from Mr Peterborough's, and some of them are almost dainty enough to entice fleas away from a Kennel Club show. One that particularly took my fancy was especially suited to this bitter weather. It was composed of a mauve rosette, with humming-birds-bosom eartabs. There was another called

the "Neuralgîna" for winter evenings. It consisted of a dainty little beetle, with velvet ribbon strings, and looked extremely well, worn with a respirator. But one has to pay for the fashion at Peterborough's, and Dolly says she expects her little monthly allowance from her "best boy" will get knocked full of *mal de mer* when the bill comes in. Then again every woman is a law unto herself in the matter of her headgear—though, seemingly, it does not signify what may be the style of the latest confection sent home to me from Mrs Arris's: Felice, my maid, praises it so rapturously that she compels the thought that the toque I usually wear is simply hideous. Do you know that sort of sympathy?

And now, little cousin, "Auf Wiedersehen," as they say in Vienna, and be sure you do not worry yourself about that "acute debility and prostration" any more. You should rejoice that you are not too healthy: to be so, makes one look so coarse, I think.—Always yours, dearest,

MAUDE

DECEMBRE

MOUNT STREET MANSIONS,
THURSDAY.

MY DEAREST MADGE,—

Very, very many thanks for your perfectly sweet letter, and for the little sketch of Daisy Freemantle as she appeared as Psyche at the conversazione of the Blind Boys' Home. Only fancy! But I presume the officials are blind as well as the inmates; still, what of the audience? Lest I should drop it or leave it about anywhere, I put it on the fire, and even the Screened Wallsend seemed to grow a little warmer!

How very kindly, I must say, you ask about poor Charlie's numerous flotations; but there are no longer any companies in existence; the poor boy was driven to wind them all up on a dismal day of last month. The truth is, dear, Charlie really is not sordid enough to be a success as a promoter—indeed, he has done some of the

very poorest promoting the City has ever seen, the *Financial News* says. In other words, he can initiate, but cannot carry through, a fact which his deplorably scanty equilibrium at the bank will readily attest. Others have gathered the honey of prosperity from the artificial flowers of speech that bloom in the modern prospectus, but we—if I may be allowed to use the first person plural, a prerogative hitherto exercised only by editors and persons with tapeworms—seem to have signally failed to do so. And failure to complete, in a City sense, means many disagreeable things undreamt of in other professions. The field-marshal who goes under to white-flaggery, is excused when he explains that it was all through carrying too much of the milk of human kindness in his phials of wrath; the physician, whose diagnosis of the case caused even the apothecary to smile, can hide the resultant remains away in the cold, deep earth, covering up his blunder with a neatly-written death certificate, couched in a few well-chosen words, but the city man who only thinly applies the ointment to the applicant for shares—the amateur promoter who omits to rub the prospectorial liniment deep into the system of the allottee, frequently finds that his little financial bantling

is liable to turn round and bite him. To be more precise, dear, the anthropoid hoodlums and pudding-headed country clerics who had taken shares in one or other of poor Charlie's companies, began, early last month, to clamour for dividends, which, of course, did not exist. The Horseless-Horse-radish debenture-holders, and the Potted-Air preference B's were especially blatant. Not only did they show hopeless imbecility in their importunity, but they were most offensively rude as well, and some even threatened "proceedings." Can you imagine people being so asininely stupid?

Such treatment was not to be tolerated, so, on the evening of the 7th, Charlie posted to each of them a notice—which would reach them some time on the 8th—calling a winding-up meeting of each of the respective companies, at a hotel up a court in Cheapside, for half-past eleven on the morning of the 9th, and, late on the evening of the 8th, Charlie, and his solicitor, and his solicitor's head inquisitor, repaired to this excellent hostelry, so as to be in good time for the monster meeting on the morrow. But not another soul turned up! Though slips of paper, printed with the names of the different companies, were affixed to Charlie's bedroom door, and Charlie himself, with his legal advisers, stood there ready to be

criticised or cross-examined, not a single obstreperous stockholder put in an appearance!

In a loud voice, which could be distinctly heard above the distant braying of many military bands, the solicitor called on any dissatisfied shareholder to step forward and show cause why such and such a company should not be summarily wound up on the spot, or for ever hold his peace, and, there being no dissentients, the proceedings were formally declared closed. Then, borrowing three chairs to stand upon, so as to see over the heads of the people, Charlie and his solicitor, and his solicitor's chief executioner, went to the bottom of the court, and beheld, on the other side of Cheapside, scores and scores of the importunate shareholders being punched on the nose and thumped in the mouth by the stalwart City police-constables, who would cheerfully have sacrificed human life rather than suffer a single living soul to cross the sanded thoroughfare until the whole of the Lord Mayor's procession had gone by.

And now, child, let me try and 'tell you how exceedingly surprised I am at your knowing Sir Joseph and Lady Sweyn; what a very small world it is, to be sure! Of course, they are no longer exclusive, let alone smart, whilst his is merely a courtesy title; still, it certifies that he

is the son of his father, and, in the social set of which he is still an ornament, that is no small distinction. At Richmond, three years ago, they lived next door to us, and cultivated our acquaintance through Sir Joseph mistaking our front door for his own one night when speechless, and having a fit in our hall, on the morning after which, Lady Cassiopeia called and left cards on us. It was a mere dressing-gown friendship—a sort of early morning familiarity without any real or professed affection; but you must write and tell me *every single thing* she has ever told you about me, although I have always loathed her for her cynical sneers and her sugared impertinence generally. And *tricky*, my dear? Why, that woman has *all* the possibilities catalogued: she is “three shades thicker than gallus,” as a dear little mite of a boy-messenger, all boots and ears and zinc cap-plate, said to me the other day, alluding to his abandoned mother, for the sweet cherub was too young to swear.

I remember one night sending Charlie in next door to see if Lady Cassiopeia had finished with my jaborandi hair tonic. It was a bitter night, cold enough to freeze the toenails off a cast-iron dog, and Lady Cassiopeia appeared to be quite alone. Had Charlie's sense of caution been

at all alert, it should have told him that he was fishing for trouble, and had better keep his weather eye on his cork, but—well, *you* know, Madge, how careless Charlie always is : in the hands of a designing woman, seemingly friendly, but substantially as treacherous as egg flip, he is as plastic as warmed wax. Almost before he had fairly got inside the entrance hall, Lady Cassiopeia gripped his sleeve, led him unresisting into her boudoir, closed the door behind her, drew the portière, and then demanded, dramatically :

“What passes here goes not beyond that door. An’ you set the slightest value on my good opinion, an’ it be your desire that our friendship, such as it is, do continue, *here* and *now* you will perform a service which, though trifling to you, is all in Heaven and on the earth below to me. In plain words, sir, and candidly and unreservedly, *where* did my husband go with you last night?”

My poor Charlie was completely flabbergasted ! He felt as consciously cheap, he says, as a coarse chromo of Peter Jackson on the walls of the Vatican. As a matter of fact, he had not stirred outside our house, but had been taking the heated-iron cure for lumbago—“thatte awfulle payne,” as Chaucer puts it, “acrosse ye loynes whych tempteth one to give somme varlet nvneteene-and

sixpence to pick uppe ye quidde which one has dropped"—and had gone to bed soon after nine ; but it was abundantly clear to him that Sir Joseph had been tearing the town open, and had basely incriminated him in his home-coming lie, the fib which men tell in order to bring the plums of domestic peace once again within reach of the pole of husbandry. Now you may have noticed, dear, that men *never* "go back" on one another, and my poor Charlie was certainly not lacking in the blind loyalty that characterises the male on such occasions ; but the fictitious story of the night's doings, he said, was "harder to open than a kingpot," whatever that is. Still, out of her own impatience, Lady Cassiopeia assisted him.

"Never mind the early part," she cried, with quivering nostrils and her right slipper beating time on the carpet, "commence with your leaving Verrey's, after dinner—what then?"

It is no child's task to describe a West-end orgie, and, keep³ it as colourless and devoid of deleterious matter as an evening at the Polytechnic, but poor Charlie plunged headlong and blindly into his spurious narrative, lest the hippopotamus mood, which was momentarily becoming heavier upon him, dried him up entirely like an aged hemlock. So, with an

assumed penitence, he told her how they first commandeered the Café Royal for coffee and liqueurs—had about seventeen—then Joe got hungry again and had snowbirds on toast, or something—after which, old brandy in tumblers at the Bodega in the street behind—Joe wanted to see the manager, named after some admiral or other, but the manager had gone to open branch agency in Honolulu—next, to the Empire, to see Dickie, but Dickie said to be gone home to bed for three days—next?—now where *did* they go next?—oh yes, to have an absinthe with Phillippe! Certainly *one* turn with Vernon Dowsett and Jimmy Howell; then—easy! Quite so, *then* Joe said he proposed to terminate the proceedings by opening just *one* keg of nails at the Carlton. Well, *that* was fatal! They had supper *there*—*crème de menthe* and *Enfant Gâté*—and ultimately discovered that they'd buzzed the last train. As by this time he was sound asleep on one side, Charlie suggested taking rooms at the Cecil—bu' Joe said cer'nly no'—pers'nlly he was p'pared t' cu's throat 'n' die dirty rather th'n fail to c'nnect. Hansom cab—thirty bob—eggs—'n'-bac'n, cab'm's-shelter—marv'l's!—long, dark streets—slumber. Remembered being pulled out of a hedge in Roehampton Lane, also re-starting;

but precisely how it all ended he couldn't say to save his pelt!

It was then that Lady Cassiopeia turned on him, a lissome, reed-like, languorous pantheress, and laughed at him scornfully; but, in a moment, her mood took a merry turn, and, slapping his cheek in spiteful play, she held out her hand and cried:

"Shambling, pseudological, sheep-faced old exile from Hades! So *this* is how men lie to their friends' wives, is it? But I forgive you. I forgive you freely, for dear old Joe and I never stirred outside the door last night! He told me he simply *yearned* for a feed of grilled sprats, and as grilled sprats are a cult—a sacramental feast to be snatched with the fingers from a consecrated gridiron, amidst prayer and eucharistic incantation, in a shrine from which the unlearned and unclean are excluded—why, I gave my maids a holiday, donned an old and sacred dressing-gown, and held high communion at the kitchen fire. And now, firstborn of Ananias and Sapphira—git! But stay, the strong should be merciful; I will give you a parting whisky-and-soda!"

And now, whenever Charlie displeases me, I have only to address him as the "sheep-faced exile," and he grovels and squirms; but on no account, dear, omit to write and tell me every single thing that has happened concerning that creature.

What do you make of the split-up of the Pubgoers' Club, and to which of the new organisations shall you belong? Charlie, always logical, has declared his intention of following whichever mob gets Mr Suffolk-Bassoon's delightful little orchestra: it *does* render dance music so divinely; personally I think dear Arthur Roberts put the case more concisely than anybody else has done in his early morning speech at the Eccentric last Friday, the report of which I clip from the *Referee* and append:

MR ARTHUR ROBERTS then rose, amidst cat-calls and a shower of crusts and loaf-sugar, to a point of order. He denied having requested the previous speaker to hold his jaw; far from it, if the gentleman would merely undertake to hold his breath, he, the speaker, would cheerfully send down to the cab-rank and borrow a curb-bit for him. (Uproar.) He could imagine no more suicidal policy than that advocated by the opposition, of drawing the club's balance of a "monkey" out of the bank and lumping it on Volodyovski at "fourse's" and evens, both to weigh at the ring-side, thumbs up, catch-as-catch-can, the wheel tax to be taken off marmalade, a penny allowed on the bottle, and may the best man win! (Loud cheers.) But there was another aspect of the subject. It would be fresh in their minds that when Shock-Headed Peter was falsely accused by Sweet Nell of Old Drury of conduct which he, the speaker, could only characterise as being unkey-purdoodlum—(hear, hear!)—it was expressly stipulated that the early-door crowd was not started in the interests of economical young men, seeking enough hugging in one evening to last them till the following Sunday. (Cheers.) Consequently, what had happened? Not only had the poor girl been forced to carry

the same old roll of music—the same old typewritten “part”—along the Strand five weeks after the piece had ceased running, in order to keep up appearances and preserve a profitless peace with her mother, but the whole control of the club had passed into the hands of *persona non grata*—(hear, hear)—and there was in addition an objection to the winner by an “also ran” on the grounds of bumping, biffing, and boring. (Applause.) Was it for this that his, the speakers, noble ancestor, dear to every British leading-lady’s heart as Uncle, or the Chorus Girl’s Friend, had bled from the nose all over the hearthrug at a cost estimated by the landlady as a fourth of the National Debt? No. Very well then. Their course was perfectly clear. (“All off the course, *please!*”) Are you ready? Fifteen-two, fifteen-four, and a pair’s six—Go! Despite the basic and fundamental rumours that the horse had been given three buckets of water by the trainer’s sister, he should support the favourite—beg pardon, the committee. (Loud and prolonged cheering, in which the speaker joined heartily).

And now, little cousin, comes the potent question, how is your Christmas outlook? Remember this is the “next year” in which you resolved to do such big things just twelve months ago. If by my advice and guidance you have become a social success, you have probably forgotten entirely how it was that you became so, none the less I have done my level best, though “I would that some one more capable had been called upon to fill my position,” as the nervous bridegroom observed as he arose on his hind legs at his wedding breakfast. For me, Christmas has but a shadowy prospect. Though poor Charlie, as you will readily concede, footed it right merrily

while his dance was on, he is just now distinctly under the weather; whilst Aunt Parker, who seems to be proof against the only one cure for neuralgia—that of getting into the absolute state of not remembering one's own name when hearing it spoken—has asked more than once for prussic acid sauce with her Christmas pudding. My dearest friend, Marjorie Markwell, who fondly hoped to retrieve her fallen fortunes by opening a book-shop in Great Portland Street for the sale of the works of the late Rev. Mr Malthus, points sadly to the never-ending procession of perambulators passing her door as corroborative evidence that the pamphlets are not meeting with a ready sale; whilst even as I write these lines, poor dear Henrietta Treadwater may be suffering excruciating torments from the surgeon's instruments necessary to cancel an advanced case of appendicitis. Only this morning I called at the nursing home at which she is lying, but she sent word down that she was already on the operating table in such a position that she could see no one; still—still I will not despair: the sun will surely shine again,—Yours for the belt, MAUDE.

MOP FAIR

EPISTLE I

EATON SQUARE, Tuesday, June 16th.

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

Yesterday was the nineteenth anniversary of my unhappy birth, and I am going to open my heart to you chiefly because it was during that white-violet epoch of innocence and virtue, the few days prior to my being bundled off to the same continental boarding-school as yourself, dear kid, that I remember some countrified wiseacre with rather less reverence than all the rest for the holy tradition beginning:

“ God bless the Squire and his relations
And keep us in our proper stations ”—

remarking that it didn't greatly matter *what* companionships a girl formed at a Swiss *pensionnat de demoiselles* since her own self-respect and her shame at the remembrance of

the fun in the dormitories would impel her to drop all such *participes criminis* with electric promptitude on her return to England—a fatuous piece of prophecy which our continued friendship flatly disproves. So, between you and me, dearest, I frankly admit that mine has been a joyless birthday by reason of my impotent yearnings after that which I have never known—paternal love; for I feel quite sure that I told you on that interesting night when at the Foire au Pain d'Epices we first tasted *crème de menthe*, I came into the world many years before the Countess of Chertsey, my mother, entered into a matrimonial alliance with Mr. Cecil Contango, since when her social obligations and engagements have been so numerous and engrossing that she has never yet found time to tell me even my father's name. In my childhood I was alluded to merely as “Féo's Indiscretion,” and as her photographs of that day represent her as being extremely fascinating and beautiful, it may even be that she herself got twisted in her bookkeeping. I have a vague remembrance of her coming to see me at the tiny cottage at Harrow where I vegetated with Nurse Knapper, on one Sunday afternoon when the trees were all yellow with laburnum and the bushes all lavender with lilac, and most probably the tall, military Romeo in the dark cutaway, who accompanied her, was He. For as my,

mother kissed me at parting, she turned to Romeo and said, "Surely you can spare me an hour or so to-morrow to do a little shopping for her?"; at which he shuddered dreadfully and gasped out, "Me in the streets on a Monday in the daytime? Féo, you must be mad! Didn't I tell you coming down that if only Fortnum and Mason would trust me for a couple of raised pies and a case of old brandy I intended hiding in the crypt of St Paul's till the bookies had forgotten all about the City and Surburban?"

I saw Romco once again later in the year when I was dreadfully ill—I had been many days delirious through drinking rain-water; not that all delirium is incurred in that way, but country children commonly romp until they can drink a rain-barrel dry, and—well, as Sarah says in the song, "That was the ruin of me!" When next I saw Féo (as I have been trained ever since that period to address my dam; and to-day I draw hush-money of her to call her "Sister!") it was not Romeo who brought her down, but a spruce and elderly military buck with a hot eye and a Ceylon breath, who obviously dyed his hair and probably kept at least three different vintages of purple morning mouth-wash on his dressing-table: the kind of man who involuntarily rubs his hands together and waxes eloquently conversational on entering the room in which the cloth is laid, and the red hock glasses punctuate

the cutlery at regular distances. At setting eyes on me (then six years old) he stroked my hair and, turning round, kissed Féo, which struck me as a strangely odd proceeding, not knowing, as I do to-day, that nothing more delights the elderly than to be accused of paternity.

But why should I bore you, dear, with this melting tale of "my salad days when I was green in judgment," as Cleopatra, Marc Antony's Alexandrian daisy, observes; why inflict upon you these uninteresting details of my girlhood—that flabby stage of existence in which one is principally conscious of growing out of one's underclothes? It may give you some idea of my detestation for the beings with whom I live in dependence and—then is my ink not wasted.

Yesterday was a day of storm and stress—for Féo. For once the gods on high Olympus heard my prayer and dealt "Cecil's little honey-bun" as big a bit of retributive justice as she will digest in the next six weeks. It came about in this way.

Despite her unflagging efforts to keep him strictly to quarters, Féo's polished, sin-worn, stockbroking old fragment is distinctly and extravagantly flighty. All girls of one-and-twenty look alike to him; or, as the Saturday-to-Monday hussy said of the M.C. of the seaside dancing-rooms, "he's a bit partickler, but not what you might call *nasty* partickler." From

the Regent Street barmaid with the yellow hair to the Dover Street cloak-model with the thirty-six bust "All are Welcome." And perhaps after all, the only people in the world who are truly virtuous—the few remaining savages—are only so because they do not know any better. Poor things! In any event Mr Contango is an indecisive wobbler, as his cuffs constantly covered with illegible addresses of unknown peeresses abundantly prove; and yesterday morning one of the maids of the bedchamber brought to Féo a telegram which she had found under Mr Contango's pillow. It was a hot bobsworth and had evidently been delivered to him at the club at which he dined on the previous evening. In the ardent language of omnibus-love, it began by assuring the addressee of the sender's constancy and devotion, and concluded by arranging a meeting for "seven to-morrow under the clock at Charing Cross"—plebeian Strephons being as incurably addicted to love-making "under the clock" as patrician ones are under the table.

In an aggressive state of hysteria and tears, Féo burst into my morning-room, but as the vapours are absurdly out of fashion and the woman who is on the verge of flopping is worthy only of the most pitying contempt—as, moreover, I had already laughed heartily over the telegram with the maid who found it—I manifested no emotion.

"Read this, read this!" she hissed, thrusting the pink slip into my hands. "Am I—am I to believe my eyes?"

"A telegram can be repeated," I suggested, remembering the legend on the back of the form, "at one-half the charge for transmission, any fraction of one penny less than one halfpenny being reckoned as one halfpenny. At the same time the Postmaster-General will not be liable for any ——."

"Have you no pity for me, Viola?" she whined. "Mr Contango has forsaken me to go out girl-hunting."

"If so venerable a kernel, once encased in a prickly shuck—the development of a towering spike-bloom—could arouse my compassion, I should be compelled to lament the fact that I had become hopelessly dippy," I replied, "but since your mental calibre is so low that you choose to look after one man instead of being looked after by a hundred, I must not deny you my counsel and assistance."

At this she blubbered afresh and kissing me on the forehead—ugh, how I rubbed the spot with Piesse and Lubin later on!—she took my hand in hers and cried:

"And you shall find me *so* grateful, child; for instance, to-morrow you shall have that lovely chinchilla stole on which you set your heart."

"Doesn't the granny muff go with it?" I asked with apparent indifference.

"Y—yes, the muff as well," she stammered.

"Better put it down in black and white," I suggested, setting my *écritoire* before her. Bargains driven with difficulty are too often the last to be complied with. "Now then," said I, as I folded the voucher and locked it in my desk, "*quo vadis*, madame? Are you steering this craft with your heart or your head? Is the philanderer to be reclaimed in accordance with the rest of your belated theories, or is he to be gaffed and subsequently landed in the Court in which men and women are put asunder? The first is the semi-colon, the second is the climax."

"Vi, dear," she said, as I had all along foreseen she would do, "the semi-colon, please."

"That means," I interpreted, barely succeeding in suppressing my disgust, "that we include ourselves in the Charing Cross assignation. Very good, I will be ready for you at half-past six;" and I left her. Poor fool! Small wonder that every nation in the world agreed upon the point of woman's folly long, long ago; and what manner of creature is this, that, finding herself disesteemed by her mate, buys a love philtre and introduces it furtively into his evening beverage to try and bring him back? Pah! Excuse me, dearest Pat, if I abandon the subject—it overcomes me!

By half-past six Féo had cried herself hideous ; nevertheless she was dressed to go out, and, indeed, desired nothing more than to fall upon the sinner's neck and weep afresh. Possibly there are faults on both sides—as the Southend shell-fishmonger said to the bean-feasters when they complained that they couldn't keep his pickled cockles down. Possibly (again) I was wearing a more than ordinarily militant expression as I stood there, for Féo next said, with characteristic vacillancy:

“On reflection, child, I have decided to go alone. A *confrontation* of this kind is not a spectacle for your young eyes.”

“And pray how are you going?” I asked, instantly perceiving the manifest advantages of being there myself, unhampered and alone.

“The landaulette is already at the door,” she said. It, or some other kind of car, invariably has been ever since she took to introducing these things to her friends, and paying such of her debts as no woman, however brazen, could continue to owe with complacency, with the resultant “commissions.”

“Just as I imagined!” I rejoined, with an acid sneer. “And with James and William in powder and smart liveries on the box—‘Royalty-visiting-Royalty’ personified—I’ll be bound! A pretty way indeed to play Paul Pry—hanged if I don’t think you’d go deerstalking accompanied

by Sousa's band! Oho! see, just across the burn, yon big black stag feeding low down with five-and-twenty hinds: will you kindly have the goodness to strike up *The Washington Post-office*! Really, Féo, you are almost too absurd for human toleration. No; you will go to the Embankment on the Underground, and, turning up Villiers Street, will mount the wooden stairs and enter Charing Cross station by the side door. Six paces diagonally to the left will give you a position from which you will command an unobstructed view of the entire platform-approach from behind Smith's bookstall: you will thus face the clock as well as every door by which the guilty pair can enter. So now, good-bye. I am, by the way, fiscally crippled till the end of the month; what sugar have you?"

Helping myself to a few sovereigns from her proffered purse, I dutifully kissed her hand and followed her to the hall doors, waiting there—to the no small wonderment of the footmen—until I saw her turn the corner into Belgrave Place, when I promptly slipped out also.

Being fortunate enough to pick out a really good hansom, I was probably the first from *our* stable to reach the battle-ground, and, ensconcing myself behind an abutting corner of the Continental Parcels Office, I endeavoured to decide in my own mind which of the many casual Eves present was the other runner. My ultimate fancy

rested between two. The first of these was a tall blonde, in a heel-tipping skirt and mess-jacket of blue herring-bone, with turquoise velvet cuffs and *empiècements* and guilt studs. The cabman who set her down and received a bare shilling for his fare, asked her—very kindly, I thought—if she really felt she could spare it, at which she told him she would gladly have made it more, but she had only a penny left, and might need that herself. The second was a decided brunette in a daring blending of pink chiffon and pale yellow silk, worn with a mauve Tam-o'-Shanter with a gold quill, and patent-leather boots with white cloth tops. Omitting the white cloth tops, she was the living ideal of the persecuted heroine of *Under the Red Macintosh, or the Toque-Builder's Typewriter*, which, of course, you remember quite well. I often take it up, for there has always seemed to me to be such a genuine touch of human nature about "Gwendoleyn's" landlady who was partial to a little drop of gin, and used to drink it out of a footless egg-cup which she carried in her reticule whilst tramping the streets with "Gwendoleyn" in search of an honourable theatrical engagement, such as a lady could accept.

It was at two minutes past seven, or thereabouts, that Mr Contango appeared. He passed by the blonde in the blue herring-bone with the wig-wag walk unnoticed, nor did he pay the

least attention to "Gwendoleyn" in the pink and yellow: you may well imagine my surprise! As he approached the bookstall—and there were so many people about that my eyes followed him only with great difficulty—blundering madly towards the spot where the warmest panther in the Peerage lay crouching for a spring, there burst from the swing doors of the Ladies' Cloak Room a tall, fair girl in grey, her nostrils dilated, and her Rembrandt-red hair crowned by a black beaver Toreador, with a pink vulture's pom-pom introduced jauntily on the left side! She saw Mr Contango, as she thought, departing, and ran towards him; but while there still remained a good ten feet of platform—and thrice ten solid strangers hurrying across it—between herself and her lover, she suddenly arrested her progress as the infuriated Féo dashed from her ambush, and, with a small but firm gloved hand, gripped her lawful incubus by the right coat-sleeve!

"Pray, Mr Contango, what brings you here at this unusual hour?"

The coward quailed beneath her infuriated glare, and struggled as fiercely as he dared without incurring public resentment, to wrench his imprisoned arm free. Féo, however, clung like a barnacle to a ship's keel. But she couldn't give the weight away. His superior avoirdupois enabled Mr Contango to tug her steadily through the unsympathetic crowd, and, wilfully and

deliberately—though Féo, poor fool! did not realise it—into the route or pathway down which a grimy railway-porter was pushing an iron-wheeled trolley, burdened with two-score of sooty and malodorous carriage-lamps.

“My leave, please, my leave; mind ’er grease!” growled the fellow, shoving the corners of the truck into the just and unjust alike.

A strange light shone in Mr Contango’s eyes: it was a beam of inspiration. As the cumbrous hand-waggon with its glittering but grimy cargo passed by him, he very adroitly wiped his right palm along the oil-blackened tops of the lower tier of smoking lamps; then closed that hand and kept it for a moment behind him. Féo, meanwhile, finding the pulling growing gradually more feeble, fatuously imagined that the fish was spent, and getting out the conversational gaff to despatch it, reiterated:

“Mr Contango, I demand to know where you were going?”

“Certainly, dearest. Straight into the lavatory. Just look at this, as Serpolette says——” and he stuck out the paw that literally reeked with oily blackness.

“Been shaking hands with one of your city friends, I presume?” sneered Féo, stepping back to avoid contact with the paw, for, to do her justice, Féo is always so daintily, unimpeachably

turned out that even the flies wipe their feet before alighting on her.

"Alas!" replied Mr Contango in a melodramatic way, espying an exit from his dilemma, "there is one friend at least whose honest hand I ne'er may grasp again—(here he improved his market by covering his eyes with his hand, thereby transferring much soot to his face)—I fly to his bedside now—now, er—by way of the lavatory. Do not further detain me, dear heart."

"I release you that you may perform your much-needed ablutions," stipulated Féo, loosening her grip, "but I still await you, and your explanation, here. Go, and return quickly;" and Mr Contango slunk away as meanly as did Theseus when he gave poor Ariadne the slip on the "front" at Naxos.

Down the stone steps went Mr Contango, and into the palatial marble dungeon on whose atmosphere the all-pervading odour of scented-soap has a firm half-Nelson, and whose echoing walls magnify the hiss of the half-minute rushes of water into the roars of Niagaraic torrents. At least that is how such an apartment was once described in the report of an inquest upon a defaulting attendant who had committed suicide on being told after the quarterly stocktaking that he was two-hundred-and-fifty-four wash-up's, ten roller towels, and eight gold fish short.

As he descended the stairs, Mr Contango's concernment was less for his lawful than for his unlawful partner, but his lucidity returned on the instant of his setting eyes on a middle-aged postman who was dallying at the wash-basins, the traditional fidelity of the postman being readily apparent to anyone who has looked over some of the continental postcards which he, in spite of all temptations, has faithfully surrendered to the addressees. Therefore Mr Contango went up at once to the postman and said :

"I have two little commissions for you to execute; they will not occupy you more than five minutes, and the pay is one shilling a minute. First of all, go to the booking-office and purchase me a first-single to some station a little way down the line; no matter where. Take this half-sovereign and bring me the change."

So the postman went. He was an unconscionable time gone, the delay mainly arising out of his ingenuous consideration for his employer's pocket. With praiseworthy economy he selected "Spa Road, Bermondsey," at the ticket-window, and, as first-singles to that fashionable promenade are seldom or never asked for at Charing Cross, the booking-clerk had to fake one with a typewriter. The joy of the simple letter-carrier at having nine-and-sixpence to return in change was so real, however, that Mr Contango checked his

angry impatience, and hurriedly proceeded to instruct the postman in his second errand.

"Upstairs, just over by the big slate on which they chalk up the Channel weather report and the number of baggages on the Folkestone boat," he said, "you will see a young lady—tall and fair, with lavishly large brown eyes; wearing a grey frock, and a black hat with a pink feather in it. Hand her this card, and—ah, yes, here are the five shillings I promised you;" and he placed in the postman's hand the silver and one of his visiting cards, inscribed:—

"Fly. Pray pardon this seeming but unintentional despotism, Queen of the Human Race, but PLEASE fly: we are observed. Will pick you up later on. You and you only, the entire time for
CECIL."

From half-way up the lavatory steps, with his keen eyes on a level with the platform, Mr Contango watched the postman single out the tall girl in grey, and deliver his message. He saw her smile sadly—tall women have not the vital force of little women—as she turned to leave the station by the arched exit through

which the cabs pass, and, sticking the railway ticket conspicuously in his hatband (an unusual proceeding, but a desirable one in the circumstances), he sallied forth to rejoin his wife with as brave a show of unconcern as ever a man returning to a life of irksome chastity carried.

"And now, dear Féo," he said blandly, as he rejoined the surmising simpleton who was fully prepared to submit to a mild remonstrance on the more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger, or deplorable-pity-of-a-man-marrying-a-woman-who-never-seems-to-understand-him lines, as the price of her victory, "is your stirring little farce at an end, and am I to be permitted to smooth the pillow of my poor friend who lies at the point of death at—at, er—Tunbridge Wells?"

"Tunbridge Wells!" she echoed, half acquiescing only for the reason that her brain was reeling at her utter inability to reconcile the proposition to the telegram still in her pocket; "I presume that, without an atom of luggage, you would return to-night?"

Strolling aimlessly across the station as they talked, they had by this time reached the open door of the glaring refreshment-bar, and as Mr Contango raised his eyes he caught an instantaneous reflection in the oblong mirror, just ahead, of a group of three persons of which he and his wife were but two.

The third was the faithful postman!

Straight up came the blundering idiot and roared as if into a megaphone :

"I give the laidy the note as you wrote downstairs, sir, an' she said All-right; she'll go straight up to Verrey's an' wait in the restarong till you join her ! "

Féo and Mr Contango returned to Eaton Square in eloquent silence and a four-wheeler, and ascended at once to their respective rooms to sulk, Féo first going to the very nadir of narrow-minded littleness by locking the street door and taking the key upstairs with her—which proceeding on the part of a countess so shocked Andrews, our head butler, that he handed Féo his portfolio when he passed the matutinal mocha and the vesper rashers this morning. How it will all end I little know and care considerably less. Quite possibly Féo will once again act the upper and the nether millstone by the essentially materialistic man who seems not to worry about little inconsistencies so long as he leads the life dictated by the senses; probably he will tardily give her his word of honour to leave undone the things which he finds himself unable to do; also to be seen at church between drinks on a Sunday. The only certainty about these squabbles is that, whenever this excessive hammering in of the old, well-settled nail is going on, the burden of supporting existence in the company of the two

most morose and splenetic mortals in London falls upon *me*. How truly has Ben Jonson said, "Apes are apes, though clothed in scarlet!"

Have you heard, by the way, what a fearfully narrow squeak dear Lady Invernairne had the other day? Her marriage to the middle-aged Earl was, of course, a terrible error—though not in the sense intended by the Parisian restaurateur whose consort's arithmetic as practised on the customers' bills was so distinctly "against the consumer" that Monsieur once assured one of his intimates, "Jules, mon vieux, I would not take fifty thousand francs for the errors committed by madame, my wife, this season alone!" No, dear, it was a mistaken business in the sense that while she was—and still is—positively irresistible to any right-thinking bachelor in any part of Christendom, he soon returned to his old life of club, and race-meeting, and card table. Naturally she has had to console herself, and—well, the other day she was sitting at her tiny writing table, penning a note that commenced with "My very naughty, but delightful darling," and concluded with "Yours and yours alone, I swear," when she became suddenly aware that the Earl had entered the room and was standing immediately behind her, looking over her shoulder, and doubtless reading sentences which were warm enough to have caused growing wild flowers to droop their heads and wither. Without an instant's hesita-

tion she dipped her pen deep into the ink pot, signed the letter in a bold hand "Jane Huggins," and arose with the remark:

"There, that's done! But who in the wide world could have foreseen the domestic servant problem reaching the point of compelling a Countess to write her illiterate, but in all other senses desirable, parlour-maid's love-letters?"

From the Far East there returned yesterday, torn and seared, Lieutenant Percy Brancaster, who a year or so ago was betrothed to the Honourable Mrs Attie Alderney, the young Meredithian widow of his once dearest chum—at least they were at Harrow together, and Attie never set eyes on Percy without soundly punching his head, even if he had to run a hundred yards to do it. Percy, as you doubtless are aware, was deeply in love with Phyllis Postance long before Attie Alderney came along and took her, after which, poor thing! he was like the solitary prisoner who had nothing to do and nowhere to go when they took him out of the Bastille and destroyed it. Having left the Navy through a breach of regulation number two-million-eight-hundred-and-ninety-seven, concerning the method of parting the eyebrows across the top of the nose, he became imbued with a somewhat Quixotic and reasonless desire to go and fight on behalf of the little yellow Japs, but had no sooner arrived in the Ping Yang Inlet on

the Ta-Tong River than a Russian torpedo-boat handed him the distressing injury which, I am told, disqualifies him for any active service save the compilation of some such work of personal observation as "With Neither Side in the Late War." So luckless a person, prematurely aged, his cheeks hollowed by long suffering, his once golden-brown hair all etiolated and falling, compels one's sympathy, yet one cannot quite blame Phyllis for absolutely declining to receive, let alone resume courtship, with one who as a husband would be completely incapable of ever making up any little domestic disagreement which would be sure to arise from time to time. For when the torpedo exploded, so Phyllis tells me (and she is an advanced student of Phrenology), it carried poor Mr Brancaster's bump of forgiveness entirely away! And yet we are continually being told that the "horrors of war" are much overstated!

But my hand grows cramped, so, dearest, adios.

Your affectionate friend,
• VIOLA.

EPISTLE II

EATON SQUARE, *Thursday, July 2nd.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

For three very good reasons, each in itself sufficient, I am about to tell you a profound secret. Firstly, I feel quite sure that absolute secrecy is completely impossible from you; comparative secrecy where you are concerned, dear, is only a matter of degree; so that in a week at most my news will be all over London; Secondly, I well know how hopelessly remote my matrimonial prospects have seemed to you, because everyone has told me how sympathetically you have stated your views on the subject; Thirdly, I feel it my duty as an old schoolfellow to rekindle the spark of expectancy in your own bosom by imparting the news that there is now one girl the less to oppose you in the marriage market—and though, dear, I would far rather see you develop into a sour and parchment-skinned old maid than frighten you into

making a hasty and perhaps unhappy alliance, every competitor to disappear from the betting should inspire new life in the poor crocks still unprofitably swelling the handicap, and especially those whose roses are beginning to look faded, and who are, broadly speaking, becoming manifestly frayed and shop-worn. Men, who are largely optimists, tells us that marriage will never lose its popularity, because if there were no marriages there would be no married women, and if there were no married women, who would there be for the men to make love to? But we—I should of course, say *you*—know differently. Fish will not rise at bait that has been on the hook time after time, and girls lose their bloom by being slobbered and mauled by many triflers. In her translation of the dressing-room-guide of the Baroness Staffe, Lady Colin Campbell flatly stated that much kissing was extremely bad for the complexion, so though as you say—with monotonous frequency, by the way—"we weren't doing a thing but having a good time," it really was your trifler of the moment 'who (according to his low-flash lights, poor booby!) was having the "good time" and you who were "not doing a thing," I can feel for you. At the bottom of that lane lies the Discard, dear Patricia.

It was on the box seat of a regimental coach at Ascot, while Botfly was delaying the start for the Wokingham Stakes, that I accepted a pro-

posal of marriage from Lord Evelyn Godolphin Mountprospect, youngest son of the Earl of Atholbrose. Being of our house party at Mrs Mortimer-Toddpush's, at Wargrave, he had been addressing me in rather wild superlatives all the week, but it was not until we sat side by side upon the coach, and every head but his and mine was turned towards where the delightful Botfly was playing the goat, that Evelyn permitted his right arm to reconnoitre. And Evelyn—my Evelyn—is as *svelte* and refined as his name suggests; personally, I have no desire to be pursued and hugged by a hairy monster, and Plato tells us how the early athlete goes to pieces. Imagine the loathsome lot, Patricia, of the unhappy girl united in holy matrimony with an athlete who has unexpectedly gone to pieces! Owing to the exercise of influence in high quarters, Mrs Mortimer-Toddpush says, Evelyn's military duties are considerably lightened, and consist chiefly of writing the prologues and epilogues to the plays presented by the dramatic club and showing the general's lady guests where to wash their hands. Contrast my Ascot, spent under these halcyon conditions, with my only previous experience of a racecourse; when I was driven down to Sandown Park by Mr Contango, who, being heavily in debt to the Ring, had to get under the dogcart whenever a bookmaker looked across the course!

Speaking of this terrible person moves me to relate to you an adventure into which he precipitated Féo, poor wretch ! only a week ago. Mr Contango's City affairs were, I may tell you, in a very parlous state, and what he vulgarly terms the "Carnegie-library-compound" was very scarce. He had applied frequently to Féo for one hundred pounds to keep his tailor quiet, but as Féo had some months previously entrusted him with a similar amount to pay a dressmaker's bill, and he had dishonestly expended it in taking a ballet girl to Brighton—a positively dreadful creature who, biting the wrong end of the asparagus at the table d'hôte (so Noser's Detectives ascertained) cried to the waiter, "Hoy, cully, these muddy bluebells aint half done!"—she very naturally declined. Moreover, her health has of late been so indifferent as to have soured her temper, and her physician despotically said that if she did not go at once to a more genial climate, she would before long be investigating the surprises of a future state.

Last Thursday, therefore, she and Mr Contango, followed by the luggage brake piled high, set out for the Riviera, their destination being Hyères, the sheltered little city which nestles beneath the friendly Maurettes. The train by which they proposed to travel was the eleven o'clock first-class boat express from Victoria, but scarcely had they entered that

station and alighted from their brougham than the unexpected—by Féo, anyway—happened.

Out from the refreshment buffet rushed two big men who pounced upon Mr Contango and grabbed him by each arm. One of them said something about “handcuffs,” but the other ruled it out as being unnecessary; in less than twenty minutes they would be at Brixton, he said, meanwhile if the prisoner resisted they could put him on the floor of the cab and sit on him. As Mr Contango did naught but roll his eyes in misery and groan quite audibly, Féo had to interplead.

“What—what do you want of my husband?” she demanded.

The elder of the two men took a blue document from his breast pocket and replied:

“Two hundred an’ forty-one pound thirteen an’ fourpence.”

“And what for pray?” inquired Féo.

“Judgment an’ costs, Copthall *versus* Contango—Stock Exchange differences,” answered the bailiff with an air almost of personal resentment.

For a moment or so Féo gazed with scornful disgust at the wretch who stood cowering between his captors.

“You shambling, sheep-faced exile from Hell!” she cried, “how much more are you going to cost me? Fade, fade, ye roses! Is it for this that——”

But the men cut her brutally short by saying it was high time they were moving, as they had got to fetch "another one" from Kennington before dinner; consequently Féo realised that it was up to her to get busy with her little oblong grey-green cheque-book or let her consort go—Inside! Like the fool that she is, she couldn't bear to see him buckled—indeed even as she gazed at him she was secretly longing to throw her arms around him. All intense natures quarrel with those they adore.

"Where can I write a cheque?" she asked of the man with the warrant.

"Come into the bar, lady," replied the bailiff, and led the way.

"To whom shall I make it payable?"

"Flight and Dobell, ma'am, Serjeants-at-Mace to the Sheriffs of London, at your service. But it must be an open cheque to 'bearer,' please, and my mate will remain with the gentleman while I fetch the cash."

Féo certainly squirmed a little at the prospect of remaining in the company of the bailiff and his prisoner while the tipstaff went to Coutts's and returned, but there was no help for it; Mr Contango's iron devotion to backsliding would assuredly land him in some fresh muddle if he were left alone; meanwhile the eleven o'clock train had passed on its way, and there was no other until nine that night.

"Please take a cab both ways," said Féo, as she handed her cheque and a small gold coin to the officer, "and bid the driver not to spare his cattle."

Never did ten minutes go so slowly; with the conventional splitting-headache demanded by the occasion, Féo endeavoured to still her nerves with tea in the buffet, but to no purpose. Eventually the man came back, grinning his satisfaction.

"Is this wretched business ended now, pray?"

"Quite, ma'am; everythink's all-Sir-Garnet," replied the bailiff, "of course it's not perticklarly pleasant, but we've only done our duty and I hope, ma'am—and you too, sir—will admit as we've not exceeded it. Should you do so, sir, this is our firm's address—pardon the envelope but I haven't got a card about me. Good day, ma'am, and good day to you, sir:" and they departed.

Poor fool—if only she had known! For the dirty, grubby envelope which Mr Contango instantly thrust into his pocket contained fresh clean bank notes to the value of eighty pounds—Contango's "corner," or third share, in the most disgraceful conspiracy ever conceived to victimise a wealthy wife. Mr Contango had planned the whole thing. The imaginary "bailiff" who spoke about the handcuffs is well known in the neigh-

bourhood of the Haymarket as Posh Peters, "the Panton Street Plunger," while the counterfeiter "tipstaff" who smashed the cheque is a dog-fighting publican who runs a pothouse for sports called "The Shepherd and Flock" in Golden Square—our retained detective pointed him out to me on the course at Ascot; he was dressed in a yellow suit with scarlet stripes, with a leather satchel at his waist, and a mauve opera-hat on his head; he was standing on an upturned wine-box and bellowing, "This an' the next! The old firm! This an' the next!"

Yet Féo has forgiven all. A blubbered promise to sin no more, and a written first-charge on the stock of a brace of Kentish coal-mines as innocent of the possession of a scrap of inflammable fossil as a pickled onion, have more than made peace, and Féo and her Cecil are slowly stewing in the balsamic sunshine in the tropical gardens of the Hotel des Palmiers at Hyères.

By this mention of "the proscenium of the Riviera" I am reminded, by the way, that, walking down Bond Street the other afternoon, I encountered Gertrude Viney, now a confirmed invalid through sheer worry. In good health, however, she was always a trifle too florid, so that she really looks awfully well when in fact she is dreadfully ill. As I daresay you remember, dear, she went, about eighteen months ago, to stay with a married sister during a certain

interesting period, and became so hopelessly involved with her own brother-in-law that the young mamma on her first day out, drove straight to her solicitor and had a petition put on the file. The decree nisi which resulted was made absolute only in April, the erring Gordon Peter and Gertrude being united the self-same afternoon. But now come the complications. Muriel proves to be in a rapid decline and as her death alone would bring the happy pair within the operative scope of the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill—this on the word of folks, male and female, married and single, “wives, widows, or what-nots,” as the Woman's Suffrage orator put it—they are nursing her assiduously, and are about to give a bill-of-sale on their guilty home in order to raise sufficient funds to give the wronged woman the full course of the celebrated curds-and-whey cure at Hyères. Experiencing the divine afflatus at times, poor Gertrude has put her life's romance into a poem, an autographed copy of which she gave me, and which I would, in turn, put before the whole world were it not for the fact that it seems rank sacrilege to place such pretty penmanship in the soiled hands of the practical printer. You may form an opinion of its beautiful sentiment, however, from the opening lines :

“ As Gordon dried my tears which flowed with unabated
force,
Up in the lift our lawyer rode to hand us our divorce.”

Most earnestly do I hope that no black and untoward event may mar their happiness, since it really is a most desirable alliance for Gertrude, Gordon Peter coming of a fearfully old and original Scottish family—so old, in fact, that it was his direct ancestor who died of shellfish-poisoning through eating the identical mussel that Musselburgh was named after. But before I write another line I must turn aside to tell you of the despicable way in which Lord Invernairne rang the bell on poor Lavinia over the trifling “Jane Huggins” deception of which I made mention in my last.

The elderly rake, most of whose amours are even less pretentious than were those of Zeus himself, has long been suspected by Lavinia of pursuing the beautiful in the shape of a certain hourglass-figured Maddox Street frock-hitcher—(the earlier vulgate had it “little milliner,” which, through gradations of “showroom sideshrine,” “Busy Lizzie the teagown model,” and “Miss Never-never of the night rails,” has subsided to “frock-hitcher”; though, bless your heart, what’s in a name, as the little Kaffir boy observed when he explained to the missionary that he was called “Two for Tuppence” partly because he was a twin, and partly because his father was, from his mother’s account, by no means a rich man)—who took less concern about the salvation of her soul than that her height remained at sixty-eight and

her waist measurement at twenty inches. Well, the other morning, Lavinia had heard the postman's knock, and had just caught sight of Invernairne returning to a mauve envelope a letter which he had hurriedly perused. As Lavinia swept into the room the *billet*, with its angular feminine superscription, fell upon the tablecloth, and she asked imperatively, "Pray, who is your solitary correspondent this morning?" "Why, one of those confounded scoundrels that Labouchere is always showing up!" cried the old sinner, never batting an eyelash, never petering an inch, though the angry missive, which still lay on the white damask, was from the little "side-shrine of the showroom," to say that she was so unutterably sick of her indefinite position, that unless she received a "pony" in cash (with which to go away for a few days and forget her identity) by lunch time, she was going to put on her red hat and blue bird's-eye skirt, and come straight round to interview his "squaw," tear down his tepee, and "then set fire to the prairie."

"A dod-gasted betting circular from Brussels, my darling, an alleged state-aided raffle for a carriage and pair," he continued. "It is perfectly monstrous that such stuff is allowed to pass through the G. P. O.!" Men are never too crafty to rule by pretending to submit, well knowing that a suspicious woman who has lost her temper is the prize bunk of the universe; but it was

gratuitously mean of him to kick her as she lay in a frenzy of screaming and laughing on the hearthrug, notwithstanding the pretty general agreement amongst medical men that when a person is hysterical certain portions of the body have absolutely no feeling.

Evelyn has just written to ask if he may take me on Wednesday next to the annual show of the National Sweet Pea Society, but I am far more desirous of going to the Music Hall Sports, if only I can decide how best to convey to him the fact that I am aware not only of their existence but of their proximity. And I here place it on record that my vassalage to the music hall cause dates from my perusal of the latest novelette of the enthralling "Peas-in-the-Pot Series"—*'Tween the Met and the Mogul, or Who Shared her Brougham?*—for though I can pretend neither to endorse or refute the opening chapter, in which the soulless Waterloo Road Agent, utterly unscrupulous when in search of fresh "talent," appears at the village picnic and doctors the claret cup, whereby he not only ensnares all the more beautiful of the village maidens, and precipitates an unseemly squabble between two bishops, who doff their aprons and invite each other to "settle it ahtside," but by the same mean subterfuge causes a rural dean to compromise an aged lady district visitor in a shrubbery, and a cub-curate to openly relate the

story of the chimney-sweep at Epsom; the main story is obviously inspired. Again is the keen observation of the author apparent to his readers in the chapter in which the heroine, on her death-bed, her frail life ebbing slowly away, has sent for the girl who had been in the same row in the chorus with her, with an imploring request to see her ere her spirit wings its way to the skies, and the friend, having nerved herself for the trying interview, stands weeping by the melancholy bedside and asks if there is any last service she can render. "There is, there is," cries the dying girl, as a gleam lights up her poor wan features. "In the top drawer of my dressing-table you will find about a bushel and a half of somewhat sporty photographs which I shouldn't like my Charlie to get hold of when I, alas! am no more!" And then the poor head falls back, and an unutterable calm comes over the scene, broken only by the sobs of the *confidante* as she searches among the medicine bottles to see if there isn't a solitary, but comforting, drain of gin left; it is an intensely engaging book.

With these themes taking the place of the very breath in my nostrils, I slipped out after dinner the other night disguised in an old race-course coat of Féo's, and a three-cornered French feather toque, and went for the first time in my life alone to a music hall. Had Féo been at home she would probably, with the proverbial

fickleness of *mères* in July, have tolled the bell on the whole proceeding; but I fortunately picked up in the promenade of the hall quite a nice girl, who, like myself, had given her chaperon the slip. She was dressed in a skin-tight scarlet cutaway, with a double row of half-sovs, saved by herself out of her cigarette allowance from her trustee, she said; white camel-hair felt hat with emerald osprey plume, and skirt of dove-coloured zibeline with strappings and applique of satin in the same soft tint. Although she insisted on my calling her "Hilda," I could find it in my heart only to give her my name as "Jane," a piece of churlishness for which I readily made atonement to my conscience by advancing "Hilda" the two sovereigns without which, she said, her "beast of a landlady" was going to give her in charge for pawning her sheets!

Though I discerned the wild generosity which led "Hilda" to assume this recklessness in order to put me at my ease, I really laughed so vulgarly at her irresistible drolleries that I shook one of my garters loose, and in a desperate dive for the silver buckle and a despairingly vicious tug at the pink silk, I drew the wretched thing so tight that I temporarily suspended the circulation of the blood, and put my limb in such a state of numb paralysis that I talked what the Teutons call "gab fest," and ultimately fled in confusion. Like the Virginienne in Vitechapelle, "whose

beauty and whose black blood alike invited insult," any sort of exit was the way out for me; though it seemed good, when I reached home, to lie awake and go over it all again. And I especially remembered that "Hilda" solicited me to be sure to go to the Music Hall Sports; also that when, thinking of dear Evelyn, I asked if I should bring a gentleman, she replied enthusiastically, "Ray-ther! or his blooming scalp!" Moreover, she gave me the appended programme of the various events, adding that she herself would have been a pretty hot pigeon for the third race, but that her "boy" was a bit of a blossom in some matters, and didn't wish it:—

AUTHORISED PROGRAMME OF EVENTS. ONE PENNY.

1.0 p.m. ONE MILE HARE AND HOUNDS RACE.—Proprietors pursued by Disengaged Artistes. Hares (proprietors) to receive 120 yards start, and each Hound pulling down a Hare to receive a fortnight's engagement at his, or her, highest West End salary. 11,473 subs., all Hounds. Three Hares to enter, or no race.

1.30 p.m. COMIC EXIT COMPETITION (to be won three years in succession). The Cup, a valuable piece of Royal Porcelain with two handles, suitable for any Leading Lady's dressing-room, is at present held by *Mr Alec Blinkers*, who, in his highly successful sketch entitled "Penny-a-Saucer, Pick-where-you-like," catches an imaginary white cabbage-moth, flying above a pot of muck on the back cloth, swallows it, falls over a

coffee-stall, and goes into the wings with a head-spin. There are five entries, as follows :

Ben Brill, who does the side-splitting wrasse with the dummy policeman in "The Rozzers Club Raid";

Harry Tee, whose "Melodious Ironfoundry," in which he so feelingly renders "The Blind Boy," on an engine bedplate weighing 20 cwt., heads the hanger at Wigan next week;

W. Higgs, who carries on the trunk in the first act of "The Horse Doctor";

Fred Hipoleon, hind legs of the Blondin Hippopotamus; and

The Luggage Man at Oldham (entered by wire).

2.0 p.m. THROWING THE CHAIRMAN'S HAMMER.—This long-popular event has had to be abandoned, owing to the decadence of these once flourishing officials, the last one of which has, we regret to say, just gone off his dip in St Giles's Workhouse from a surfeit of gin-and-water; but a prize for lady serioes has been substituted, entitled :

SLINGING THE BLUE WHEEZE.—First Prize, A Gallon of Sunburn Lotion, donated by the Southend Chemist that sees to the Sons of the Phoenix; Second Prize, a Nansen Ice Pick and a Sealskin Mandoline, sent by King Oscar of Sweden; Third Prize, a Japanese Pot Fern and a Dish of Hops, by the landlord of "The Three Thugs," Lambeth Walk.

2.30 p.m. HOUSE-EMPTYING HANDICAP (Standing Record, 1 min. 11 secs., by the Three Brothers Mucus, the Men Toad's, at Bolivar's Varieties, Battersea, June 27th, 1898) :

Singing Navvies with "The Larboard Watch"

Musical Clowns playing "Carnival de Venise" Owe ½ min.

Perpetrators, male or female, of dud ballad alluding to Ireland as "the brightest gem in the Empire's crown" . . .	Scratch
Stinkerini's Performing Dogs and Monkeys	Rec. 15 secs.
Male Quartette in "Man the Lifeboat" . .	" 20 "
Handbell Ringers, Sword Swallowers, and Harness Turns	" 25 "
Comic Singers alluding to the <i>pulex</i> <i>irritans</i> , the mother-in-law, or to Nausea-Marina	" 30 "

3.0 till 5.15 p.m. STANDING JUMPS (Habitual Patrons of Matinee Performances only)—First Prize, The Basket of Flowers nightly passed up by the Musical Conductor to Miss ——— (and haven't the Property Masters of the metropolis fairly nursed it!). The jumps are to be acquired on the crude grain spirit invariably sold as whisky and brandy at certain variety theatres. Competitors taking soda or seltzer water to carry 7 lb. extra; youthful scions of the aristocracy who can truthfully say—betwixt you and me, man to man, pal to pal, 'and to 'and, and 'eart to 'eart—that they have within the past month knocked a stranger's glass over and then flatly declined to apologise, allowed one gill.

As in this practical and prosaic time, when a peninsula in Manchuria can be rendered perfectly untenable by a protracted rain of cast-iron kitcheners filled with the most objectionable explosives and fired across six miles of the Yellow Sea, it makes deuced little difference, I think, whether you are elbowed by the makings of to-morrow's red-hot divorce case at an athletic meeting in the afternoon, or sit next the week-

end's flash suicide at the Opera in the evening, I fully intend going.

I am too pressed for time just now to discuss with you the matter of a suitable background for your little French friend's prospective photograph, but I do not endorse the close-clipt yew, the lichened wall, the white-stoled lilies' bending stalks, idea; surely an expectant attitude on the kerbstone outside the County Fire Office would be more akin to accuracy; but in the matter of Lavinia Rowbotham's ailment, pray tell her I have seen Dr Morbus Brighteye, and he does not consider that a floating kidney is any bar to early matrimony, especially in the case of a debutante with fifteen hundred a year. Of course, from a medical point of view, it should be stitched down, and it would quite depend on Lavinia herself whether the stitches showed. Even if they did, she could have them finished off with some silk cords and tassels (which are still enjoying a truly remarkable vogue) or a couple of chiffon bows of some bright shade; but the point is probably quite unimportant to a bridegroom who has long ceased wondering what bread-and-cheese is like to live on, and whose dress clothes are so shiny that he can see to shave in them. It was not a heroic act of his when declaring his passion to magnify his captaincy into a majority, although had Lavinia been passing the St James's several hours later,

as I was, when he was being thrown out after celebrating her acceptance, she would have had to admit that he was drunk enough for a Field Marshal, at least! As one of the buds of Flying Fox's year, she is probably none too squeamish, however; I confess that I never set eyes on her without calling to mind those frayed and worn, but still unpunctured, rubber tyres which they show in the windows of the cycle shops on Holborn Viaduct ticketed "Been in constant use for five years!" She compels one to admit at last that she has not carried a plain gold wedding ring in her purse for sixty months for nothing!

And so adieu for to-day, kid; Mars in conjunction with the Sun attracts me to the park.

Yours always,

VIOLA.

EPISTLE III

R.Y.S. *Dido*, OFF COWES, *August 4th.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

How admirably, I must say, is everything in life ordained by presei^{ent} Kismet! Fate, for instance, clearly forsees the appalling total of torn frills which, at the close of the season, must be replaced by new ones, and with August gives the social rosebud just the time she needs by putting her into flannel—and Cowes. Then how the sea-water bath, distributed over her fagged limbs by means of a small organdie-muslin bag filled with bran and benzoin, which Aphrodite so loved, that she^ę arose from it each morning only with the gr^{eat}est possible reluctance, causes her to glow and tingle! Under its mellifluent influences I have already ceased to trouble my head about Evelyn, who, with a system of love-making so amateurish that it comes within the Colonial Secretary's definition of "unskilled labour," wishes to know the reason for my not writing to him!

Is not that a man all over? He regards plighting his troth in the light of setting his foot upon my neck and holding me in bondage till he is ready to slay his passion by indulging it. No, no, Sammy Slow, no modern woman with a grain of sense ever sends little notes to an unmarried man—not until after she is married, anyway. Moreover, most girls are partial to most things that begin with f—flowers, and fruit, and flirting, for three instances—and it is not because you squeezed my waist at Ascot that I should now sit at your feet and gaze into your eyes till I die with my head in your lap. When a man extorts from a woman a promise of love, he looks for a certain show of gratitude with it. Little less exacting than the crude Walcheren Islander who expects his bride elect to go out into the fields to gather sufficient wild carrots to pay the priest and to stand and sell them in the market-place without violating the proprieties, he digs no sub-way himself; even should he make a sacrifice at all, it is only with an incipient heartache and a profound conviction of regret to follow.

Men are creatures of insane impulses; recall, if you please, Archie Toddington, whose wardrobe (since he never went out until the evening) consisted entirely of dress suits and overcoats. I am inclined to the belief, by the way, that he was but one of a numerous type, for I heard them talking at dinner the other evening of a certain

young gentleman, the son of a rural Bishop, who once took his father to dine at the Orleans Club, the boy belonging only to a now defunct institution called the Pelican besides. Now the Prelate was not without some misgivings concerning the Orleans as a manger for the cloth, but whatever were his prejudices they were dissipated on the instant of his entering the dining-room, at the sight of a gentleman, immaculately clean and most correctly clothed, who was dining all alone off a long-bone chop, a little toast, and—a pot of tea!

“Dear me!” exclaimed the Bishop, as he took his seat, “I had no idea, Octavius, that the members of this club had such simple, pastoral tastes. I am indeed agreeably surprised to find that one of them at least drinks tea with his dinner.”

“I ask your pardon, sir,” replied Octavius, “but will you kindly speak a little lower lest Mr Thornhill should overhear you. Tea, I would not impertinently remind you, is an ideal beverage for a deep thinker, and my friend yonder is quite the ruling brain of the *Athenæum*. His cogitative faculties, I have no doubt, are even now immersed in some profound distich for his next edition.”

Never did a Bishop feel in better company; whereas, as a matter of fact, Mr Thornhill, being only just out of bed, was taking his “early evening breakfast” and inwardly debating whether he should devote himself to Bessie Bellwood at

the Pavilion or Lottie Dettmar at the Trocadero, and which of the two houses possessed the easiest fauteuils to go to sleep in!

But I am neglecting Archie Toddington of the chronic dress suit.

On a certain Sunday evening at nine o'clock, then, Archie, feeling fearfully stale and solitary, and, like all misanthropists believing himself to be the repository of the whole world's suffering, strolled into St. George's Chapel in Albemarle Street, pausing on the threshold to cough, lest his sudden entrance should cause too great a shock. It was an "after dinner evensong," and the little proprietary chapel-of-ease (now alas! swept away) where evening dress was "indispensable" in the sofa-pews, optional in the gallery, and ladies' bonnets only allowed in the organ-loft, was very full of smart people who had dined late. Brave men, groomed to the last gasp of dilettante exquisiteness, and fair women from whose billowing bosoms diamonds flashed like beams of white light from Gris-nez, sat and listened with polished languor to a short, thin discourse on "Behold a woman came." Then the organ commanded closer attention by uttering an imperious peal, and Mrs Cora Brown-Potter, looking like every bird in the tree, in a ravishing low-necked evening frock of amber silk covered with black Chantilly lace, rendered slightly less *décolleté* by a white lace berthe, headed by a

band of chiffon, and depending from the bared shoulders, stood forth. The hat surmounting her shapely head was of white transparent lace-straw; its raised crown, supported by circles of mauve and white lilac in entrancing combinations, the cachepeignes being black cherries and the faint perfume of fleur-qui-meurt giving the correct signature to the only possible chapeau in which the beautiful wearer could accurately realise the entangled and difficult "atmosphere" of *The Holy City*. It was simply perfection; for a burnt-brown straw, a sheaf of Annunciation lilies, two silver thistles, a pot of musk, a splash of amethyst miroir velvet—all of which suggestions emanated from amiable worshippers in the front rows—would have ruined all.

And then she spoke her allotted lines—slowly and with measured bleat at first, but louder and louder as the organist, warming to his work, took up the running, until finally she broke into the melody itself, and——

Archibald Toddington sank down within his pew, deeply and seriously (though happily not fatally) stung. Thirty years had rolled away in half as many minutes, and once again he was a boy at Eton, hopelessly in love with the little daughter of the boat-builder, and fearing nothing but a famine at Layton's. Remorse is, after all, a thoroughly wholesome and healthy secretion: with what bitter anguish do we recall those awful

early virtues which we now know to have been only wasted opportunities!

His penitence was very real: from that hour forward he resolved to reform and lead a new life. He would begin by having a ginger ale, neat, at the Badminton, that he might the sooner grow accustomed to that harmless stomachic; again, should he live to be a hundred, he would be scrupulously careful in future always to substitute "blooming" for the ordinary embellishments to conversation. Then with regard to——

An unbidden sigh come from the very pit of his stomach as he dived his right hand into an unusually deep pocket inserted in the left breast of his waistcoat and pulled out about two hundred of their visiting cards. With moisture in his eyes he read the top one:

Of course I forgive you, but as for believing you, that is quite another thing. Am leaving Lupus Street to-night. Going to some ripping rooms in Claverton Street, close to the old pitch. Have changed name to Ida Onslowe. If you come up bring some cold stuff from that shop in Piccadilly, as my landlady's brat has got the ringworm, and I am not taking any tiffin from downstairs. *Do come.* KID.

Poor little Ida; and what a thorough little sportsman she always was! Yet she was but

one out of his last two hundred, who, as their bits of pasteboard attested, hailed from half the best-known streets and roads of the honeymoon districts of this great metropolis. He rose to leave the chapel and walked towards the door with the cards still clutched in his right hand. As he joined the fringe of the communicants who were politely shoving one another through the exit, he could move forward only at the rate of six inches a shuffle; but here again was a blessing in disguise. For as he passed through the porch, there stared him in the face a brass-bound box of polished oak, having in its lid an oblong aperture, above which was inscribed in white and gold :

“ FOR THE ADDRESSES OF THOSE WHO WISH
TO BE VISITED BY THE CLERGY.”

Without an instant's hesitation he raised his hand and dropped the ten score cards into the slit; so real, so visible, so conspicuous was the peril of these girls, that no movement tending to their redemption could possibly be adjudged too momentous. Experiencing that peculiar glow of satisfaction which comes of earning a halo and earning it cheaply, Archibald Toddington turned to the right into Piccadilly, and strolled down the incline to the Badminton.

Never in your life I suppose, dear, have you tasted a drink called “ Three-cornered Sarah,”

which is said to have been invented by a subaltern of the King's Dragoon Guards, stationed at Rawal Pindi, who wished not only to forget the past, but to be oblivious of the present and contemptuous of the future? Anyway, Archie fell in with a doughty representative of this famous regiment, and, after a couple or three goes of "Sarah," felt like carrying civilisation into the Congo, or putting down an insurrectionary hill tribe single-handed. The spell of the amber silk frock covered with black Chantilly was broken into pieces and the pieces lost; the enchantment of the white lilac hat with the black cherry cachepeignes had evaporated into thin air, and been blown into Iceland by a gale from the south. Within one short hour, indeed, Archie, who had undertaken not only to give the Dragoon a merry evening, but to ring in miracles on him in the peacherino line, so poignantly repented the loss of all his addresses, that he was found hammering on the door of the chapel and objurgating the housekeepers of the surrounding premises because none of them knew where lived the old verger-johnnie, or whatever they call him, who kept the keys of the place! Thus the cards were for ever lost to him; though doubtless the spiritual needs of the addresses received attention, for that the old-fashioned, one-idea'd bigot is not believed to exist in the Church in the present day was amply proved on the night when the

Bishop of Barchester was followed from St James's Hall to the very doorstep of the house opposite the Green Park, where he was staying for the May meetings, by a foreign lady who thought that she recognised him. As she dumbly but persistently refused to accept his assurances that he had never met her in society—and he would now probably deny the incident in toto, but that I have, curiously enough, preserved the cutting from the church paper to which he wrote for editorial advice as to how a gentleman should get rid of a female who was too persistent in the street, and the editor suggested going into a Turkish bath and suddenly disrobing—he had finally to make a swift bolt indoors and slam the door violently in her face. So loud and despotic, however, was the subsequent knocking, that the Bishop himself returned to find not only the lady, but a police constable, on the doorstep, and about three thousand idle persons gathered around them. “I ’umbly beg yer lordship’s pardon for knockin’,” said the policeman, respectful to the verge of servility, “but when you was a-lettin’ this young lady out just now, you shut her skirt in the door!”

I have often thought that if only our police-constables, who affect to be *Curii*, but in private live like Bacchanals, were drawn from a more æsthetic class than is the case, they would, by exercising a greater sense of delicacy, cause less

suffering to the susceptible. Let me illustrate my contention by admitting that I have for years been endeavouring in vain to find out what it is that the loquacious hawker at the street corner has in the pillbox. I have listened to his breezy bleat so often that I know his yarn by heart (and sometimes "give" it in congenial company), but never yet have I heard its conclusion, nor have I beheld the little animal. On every occasion, just as the Autolykan has been going to raise the lid of the box, odious P.C. 797 has arrived from the clouds and blue-pencilled the show. Only yesterday, at the corner of a *cul-de-sac* in Regent Street, I came upon the patient person of bilious temperament and doubtless sedentary habits, who experiences so many commercial cancellations at the hands of the police. As usual, he had an admiring, if not a monied audience; and he cried :

"Laidies an' gentlemen,—May I claim yer kind an' perlite attention for the purpus' of introjuicin' to yer notice a livin' novelty from the new world beneath the Southern Cross, where every prospêc' pleases, an' female modesty is so pronounced that the clean things from the laundry is never aired afore the kitchen fire for fear of upsettin' the mental balance o' the butcher's boy when he brings 'round the j'int for dinner, an' looks in at the airy winder? Thanks. I 'ave 'ere—I say I 'ave 'ere, contained in this small

box, the only insect overlooked by Adam when he took his seat on the rainbow to christen the marvellous creations o' the animal world. It is well known to, an' 'ighly respected by, the black aborigines o' Burragorang, from its intelligent 'abit of manufacturin' its own lan'marks as it traverses the jungle, by spittin' on the grass an' stoppin' it from growin', thus renderin' return easy an' loss-o'-bearin's out o' the question. Though many attempts 'ave been made to subdue, an' so tame, the little creature, the feat has been accomplished only thrice within 'istory; once by Timandra Ventidius, the Macedonian Amazon as led her countrymen in the insurrection against Turkey, armed with nothin' but an ordinary 'at-pin (tho' carryin' a quartern o' chloroform in her jeans, in case she should fall into the 'ands o' the Turks); secondly, by the celebrated Austrian savant, Yagerwohl, patentee o' the world-famed sensitised toilet-ware for hospitals, which, ev'ry time a patient washes his 'ands causes a bell to ring in the matron's room; and, thirdly, by myself, who 'ad it from a well-known 'Arley Street medical man, what went off his dot 'after runnin'-up in a local billiard 'andicap, an' who is at present immured in a private 'ome for the potty, practisin' nursery-cannons on the kitchen dresser with a tomato, a Spanish onion, an' a 'ard-boiled egg. But mere assertion is 'ardly the same thing as proof; what each one of you a-standin' round

me requires is ocular demonstration. With yer kind permission I shall therefore proceed at once to——”

“Pass away, now, pass away!” cried P.C.s 797 and 798 in chorus, and the persecuted wizard of the pillbox, bearing his adversity with as philosophical a fortitude as he could summon, sighed heavily and sneaked off. But anon, anon.

By all who do not permit the state of the market to interfere with social duty, Cowes Regatta is unanimously recognised as the only possible sequel to Goodwood; but the distinguished tenants of many of the tiny villas and cottages, half buried in the trees that cluster on the heights above the town, were witnesses of the diverting sequel to a much earlier festivity yesterday morning. But perhaps it would be better for me to present you with the events constituting the latest edition of *The Earl and the Girl*—to say nothing of the *Countess*—in their chronological order. Let us sit upon the ground, as Richard II. says.

You have heard of Lord Catterick, haven't you? A none too affluent but sound old sexagenarian sportsman, dear Kid, with a heart as big as a hyacinth farm in Zeeland, but matrimonially shackled to an ogress of fifty, too ill-tempered, domineering, and utterly unreasonable to exist save in a Trollopian novel. Colour is lent to the supposition that he married her to win an after-

dinner bet by his seemingly incurable mania for making love to every mortal thing in petticoats that crosses his path; though that may be no more than carelessness, since Virtue itself is only a continual struggle against the promptings of Nature, as I daresay you have found it. Moreover, he had been much impressed, ten or twelve years ago, by a certain passage in an erotic novel which said that the only thing to properly wake up a man suffering from acute melancholia, was a rapid love-affair with a flamingly red-haired woman, to damage whose reputation it would be necessary to hug her in broad daylight in front of the Mansion House—a none too accurate reference to Miss Jessica Dux, who is a pronounced blonde. Though only a cloak model, Miss Dux came, I understand, of a good, but impoverished family who for years accepted money reluctantly from relations, and, when these dried up, went fut. Then the seven noble girls drew lots to determine which one of them should sacrifice herself to save pater from going out to work, and—Jessica pulled out the black bean.

But for the incessant tight-lacing in the show-rooms, the wearying attentions of the manager, and the grotesque air of immeasurable superiority assumed by the customers before whom she had to strut, to turn, to pose at command, clad in creations of golden spider's-web, Jessica would

cheerfully have dropped everything else to have stayed on at Madame Junon's, for though she didn't turn a very deep furrow in the pay roll, the work was very gratifying and her hips were much admired. Then, all on a morning early, Lord Catterick in new-milk innocence dropped in to see a frock "tried on" his liege-madam. His eyes encountered Jessica's; he pencilled a few warm words on a (must have been asbestos) visiting card, and that night Miss Dux made her first acquaintance with the half-guinea dinner at the Berkeley.

It was about four months later, or a week ago, that Lady Catterick opened a letter addressed to her husband which had come by the evening post. Seldom or never before had she descended to this particular meanness, but the indented die on the back of the envelope—"Impératrice et Cie, Clifford Street, W."—proved an irresistible lure, and she broke the seal before she fully realised what she was doing. And it was a half-dead woman she was, dear Pat, as her little grey eyes ran down the many items in a bill full fourteen inches long, with a total of £368, 18s. 4d., and a final tag to the effect that Impératrice et Cie would be glad to receive a cheque from his lordship at his early convenience!

Smothered gasps and little muffled screams escaped her as she read such lines as "Chestnut Sunday, May 17th: Tagg's Island toilette of

biscuit Donegal linen trimmed broderie Anglaise with Valenciennes insertions, £31, 10s.," and " May 22nd : Lemon-tinted chiffon Opera gown with corsage of pink fuchsias a la Philemon et Baucis, £47, 5s." Then came on " June 3rd : Ascot toilette of rose-silk voile over white louisine with Alençon flounces, £52, 10s.," and on the 6th : " Southend-on-Sea boudoir gown in crêpe-de-chine, lined Japanese silk, £15, 15s.," followed by " Third-class railway fare of special-delivery porter (Saturday evening), 4s. 4d." Other entries, scarcely less disturbing, included a " Creation in white mousseline velours encrusted with black pailletté (Lingfield Park), £63, os.," a " Golden straw plait chapeau with white feathers en suite, '£7, 7s. od.," and, somewhat lower down, an " Evening frock of ultramarine chiffon embroidered silver sequins (Ponymoore's Ball), with bunches of shaded pink fruit on the décolletage, '£21, os. od.," the lot amounting, as I said before, to the quite respectable sum of £368, 18s. 4d. ! And all this, my dear, to a woman whose very feminine idea of limiting male extravagance consisted in continually demonstrating how frocks could be bought for less money than suits of clothes !

Between 7 P.M. and half-past midnight, Lady Catterick fairly fed on that bill, like the " elderly naval man," who " ate that cook in a week, or less," and the poison had time to soak in. So

that when, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 12.50 A.M., Catterick's uncertain footsteps sounded on the stairs, the Countess arose half-mast high in her bed and cleared her throat to get rid of some honest prose—for, though an unfaithful husband may dabble heavily in poetry, his deceived wife will in nine cases out of ten rely (while speech lasts, at any rate) wholly upon such plain sentences as drop from the tongue without apparent effort. Addressing him as "you Tarquin of Tagg's Island!" and "you gin-and-cockling Lothario!" by turns—the latter being an undoubted allusion to the Southend item—her ladyship crowded enough novel and up-to-date abuse into the next twenty minutes to have warranted the assumption that her life had been spent among soles and flounders rather than Courts and coronets; yet Catterick yawned through it all in absolute indifference. In reality, his oblivion was due to alcohol and, with the highly-rectified cunning which accords with alcoholisation and protects its votaries, he made no attempt to cut into trouble of any sort, though here and there in the indictment he caught a fugitive word which seemed to call for thought. When the Countess's vituperation had run its course, therefore, he stumbled across the chamber—or lurched across the room, if you prefer it—and, laying the hand of remonstrance on his wife's frilled shoulder, observed:

“Goo’ ni’, Rox’lana, goo’ ni’. I’ll say wha’ve got t’ say in morn’ng: much too tire t’ ni’. But this mush I *will* r’mark: you’re a swee’ woman, you’re a’ p’ffic lady, also a d’vout lover of Art, ’n’earnest stood’nt of Lit’rachoor, an’ a class’cal ’thority on Hist’ry, but as a wom’n of th’ world—I say as a wom’n of th’ world, Rox’lana—you’re a varnish! Goo’ ni’!”

The rapidity with which the sound of his snoring succeeded his exit, caused the worried woman even more uneasiness than the first sight of the modiste’s bill had done. Surely no guilty man could fall asleep so readily? Racked by the anguished reflection that people who are supposed to marry largely for the sake of being happy may be presumed, if they subsequently remain silent, to have gained what they desired, Lady Catterick passed a sleepless night, and turned up at the breakfast table next morning looking positively hideous.

The Earl was, on the contrary, quite breezily cheerful. Adopting a tone of amused pity—a no-matter-what-you-do-it-runs-in-your-family air—he even demanded the offending milliner’s bill, adding:

“I hate to seem to reproach you in any way, Roxalana, but upon my honour you were the human limit last night! And your phrases!—odds, blud o’ the murdered missionaries in Zanzibar, your phrases! Where do you cull it

all? From which of the Sunday penn'orths do you draw inspiration? Nevertheless, despite your eccentricities, I will remain your friend. Give me the obnoxious invoice—good—ere the lamps are lighted it shall be manifest to at least one practical joker that his sense of humour has got beyond proper control. *Adios*; I shall not be in to lunch."

As a "rare old plant" this successful bit of bluff was about a stone and a neck in front of "the ivy green," yet, once outdoors, Lord Catterick's demeanour became serious rather than jubilant. An appearance in the Divorce Court he feared less on account of any social paralysis which might supervene than of absolute financial death. No matter at what cost, therefore, *Impératrice's* bill would have to be met that day.

To look towards Israel for assistance was useless. Lord Catterick had a record in Jewry that the Shylocks themselves kept sweet only as an antidote to gluttony. He turned, therefore, to an old Harrow chum who was now an electioneering agent, with an invalid wife in the Engadine, an easy-going roysterer who was nearly always at the Club in order to get his affectionate wife's letters, and so avoid the fearful scene that would happen if one of those epistles fell into the hands of his typewriter. This good soul grew a trifle beetle-browed at first, but eventually

filled out a pink slip for £370, on the strict understanding that it didn't extend over Saturday, and Catterick started for the bank with as much front as a fortification.

Probably the world seems not so bad after all to the man who, having devoted the best part of the day to solicitation and whisky sours, has at last achieved his object, but the thing that did seem hard to Catterick was having to part with that £368 odd without keeping back a little bit of pewter for himself. Much ruminating seemed only to increase the hardship until, arriving at the milliners, he conceived and bare the brilliant scheme of paying £250 off the bill and reserving £120 for a brief congress of illicit joy away from town—why not a quiet and unpretentious run over to the Island? So entirely admirable did the idea seem that, having dropped the ten ponies to Impératrice's, he found it hard to hold himself down while a hansom carried him to Miss Dux's preposterously bijou flat. That self-same evening Miss Dux commenced her packing, and on the following day the pair set out for Cowes.

It was by the first post on the day following that of the Earl and the girl's departure, that a second envelope, bearing the indented die of the odious couturières in Clifford Street, turned up at the Catterick mansion, and all but decided the Countess to track down her husband and

shoot him. The "all but" took the shape of her family solicitor who, being personally desirous of showing up in the vicinity of Castle Garden, persuaded his client that it would be better to tickle the law into turning one foot-loose than to pay the extreme penalty for a man with a heart two sizes smaller than a golf ball. For, no longer to keep you in suspense, dear, the second communication from Impératrice's was far too significant to admit of doubt, and ran :

<i>To bill delivered</i>	.	.	.	.	£368	18	4
<i>By Cash on account next day</i>	.	.	.	.	250	0	0
					<hr/>		
<i>Balance</i>	.	.	.	.	£118	18	4
					<hr/>		

P.S.—The favour of your Lordship's cheque is politely but imperatively requested, since the person to whom the goods were supplied, by your Lordship's order and selection, has lately disappeared from her flat in Ridgmount Gardens, leaving nothing behind but an unsettled milk bill.

I. ET CIE.

I can safely leave to your vivid imagination the "scene," enacted within the range of the windows of Nubia House, which terminated this little comedy yesterday, for, notwithstanding Lady Catterick's pronounced hostility towards the Island and all its inhabitants since the day when a rustic clod of a railway porter stuck his head into the carriage in which she was travelling from Ventnor with her three somewhat shelf-worn sisters and addressing the quartette, all as sombre as convent postulants and erect as Easter

candles, asked gruffly, "All Cowes in. 'ere?" she turned up full of vigour, accompanied by her solicitor and a couple of hunting crops!

The sailor-man who periodically goes ashore in the dinghy for letters, has just brought me a wire from dear Phyllis Waring—don't you remember how we all used to sing in muffled tones in the old dormitories at the *pensionnat*:

Me name's Betsy Waring,
Wot goes aht a-chairing?

—to say she cannot come yotting for a day or two, as she has lost the latchkey of her flat, and is quite unable to lock up until she gets another. With customary good nature, she lent it late the other evening to be dropped down the back of a young lady whose nose was bleeding outside the Continental, and it has not since been seen. It certainly was not in the young lady's garments when she was undressed at Vine Street police-station a little later on; everybody present can swear to that. She is coming over, however, on Thursday; meanwhile my curiosity to learn all about her fall-out with Eustace Doorstep (or whatever was his surname) comes near consuming me. As I think I once told you, Eustace lately heard from some busybody all about Phyllis's earlier *affaire* with Geoffrey, and he raged and stormed for a time like that spoiled and undersmacked brat who did not reach the

bazaar with his nurse until the gates were closed, and consequently "didn't get a drum." Eustace is one of those simple, countrified men who want to marry a girl who has loved no one else, but whom any amount of others have idolised from a respectful distance. What logic, or—want of it! Would the honeysuckle attract the bee if it yielded no pollen?

Yours, for the next twenty minutes on a deck-chair *couchant*, lazily absorbing Nature's sermon that lives in the blue vault above.

Vi

EPISTLE IV

HOTEL VASISTAS, DINARD, *Septembre 476*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

I am pencilling these lines to you while eating strawberry ices under a warm sun in a perfectly idyllic garden full of royal roses, and within two rods and a bittock of a turquoise sea from which, just across a toy estuary, rise the imperishable crested beauties of St Malo. Here are aromatic breezes, American bars, health, vigour, culture, Parisian revue stars sea-bathing in picture hats and passionate silk stockings, the loveliest crevettes imaginable, well-aired beds, comely female servants strictly engaged without characters, petits-chevaux and the musical glasses; and still I am not happy. Since your two most prominent characteristics, next to your cheekbones, are curiosity and love of listening, I will tell you why. If there be any bottom to the theological dogma of that profound,

albeit prolix, metaphysician, Bhikku Ananda Maitriya, of Rangoon, there was a new star born in the Middle Way on Monday night, for during the small dog watches, Evelyn Godolphin Mount-prospect, fourth and youngest son of the Earl of Atholbrose, passed in his dinner pail.

He met his end in the shape of the new regimental mess waistcoat, or rather in his suicidal efforts to get into it: he died of tight lacing. Poor little Evelyn! In fancy I can see the flush of anger on his cheeks, the contemptuous coiling of his spiral nostrils as he struggled vainly with the conquering corset, breaking a whalebone here or rending the broché-batiste there, but never quite succeeding in completing the frightful misplacement of the internal clockwork of the body which only the anatomist can fully describe, and the War Office is absolutely oblivious to. Sad indeed it is to see the very flower of military chivalry stagger and fall, not on the battlefield but the parade ground, there to lie prone with its staylaces cut, the while the Army Medical Corps burns a feather.

That I ever really felt up to breaking home ties for the boy's own sweet sake is extremely problematical. Society is an over-girled community and the debutante whose female parent cares nothing for decking her out and putting her where she will be well seen is apt to have her head turned by coach-panels as richly emblazoned

as are the Athollbrose's; they are cream and gold, you may remember, with the figure of a roysterer, rampant, in a restaurant, bar sinister, above the family motto "One more won't hurt us!" But Evelyn himself was something of a feather-weight; the clinging vine rather than the sturdy oak, and the direct antithesis to what a society schoolgirl designates a hummer. Though art-gallery and shop-broke, he was more fitted to become the dog Tray of a young married woman than the money-getter to a fashionable bride of his own; and his three brothers had been much the same.

For instance, Caedmon, the eldest, who in a previous state of existence had probably been a lowing white Chillingham bull-calf, had been reared side by side with a pretty chocolate-red Hereford cow with whom (to cut the bovine metaphor) he had made love from his perambulator in Kensington Gardens. Her name was Lorna Porter, and her family tree was every bit as genteel and starchy as the acacia itself. From Eton Caedmon had sent her pretty little weekly notes enclosing buttercups and daisies privately picked from *les plancher des vaches*—(Pray overlook it for once, dear. Phyllis Waring, just off to gather champignons, is chattering at my elbow, and the French language is so infectious!)—and from Oxford he consigned further fickle screeds and fritillaries—need I explain that I allude to

the wild flowers which abound at Abingdon and not to any kind of lingerie?

Miss Porter's people, however, entertained other matrimonial views concerning her, and eventually betrothed her to a South African person who proposed to settle something like forty-thousand a year on her for fencing foils and skipping ropes—indispensable articles in the daily pursuit of flexibility and youthfulness—alone. She being a Warwickshire beauty, her sacrificial outfit was built in Birmingham and her passage was booked to the Cape, whither she was shortly to proceed in the keeping of all manner of stern relations. To Caedmon, who suddenly made the belated discovery that years of propinquity had meant something more than mere lukewarm amusement, it was an overwhelming blow, nor could he discern the slightest prospect of ever again squeezing her velvety paws or treading delicately beneath the table on the only footwear in London which would have had Cinderella beaten to pulp. The thought was maddening; yet in Lorna's impending departure Caedmon could see nothing but his own finish—a year of reckless drinking, a month's disinheritance, a family reconciliation, and a hateful future with a homespun consort.

. Gold—red gold which will achieve almost anything in existence save immunity from gout to the devotee of sparkling ales—was at length

accountable for Miss Porter finding on her window-sill one morning, an impassioned petition from Caedmon, in which he attempted to pour forth the left lobe of his soul, but only ran to about one composing-stick of third-class seaside-novelette dead-weight. Nevertheless his burning plea to be granted one brief evening of her society ere she passed out of his blighted life for ever, was expressed with sufficient clarity to appeal to any woman's inherited and cultivated love of playing with fire, and Lorna Porter inwardly and instantly resolved upon making the concession. No matter on how transparent a subterfuge, her last night in England should be given to Caedmon; her own hungering heart no less than her love for burning incense dictated it. She sent an unsigned wire to warn Caedmon that he might get his wish at any moment; after which she stood in front of her mirror and changed her jewellery six times while wondering what on earth could have first given her the idea that he was a sort of modern St Anthony at about five-stone-seven!

Now, waiting many days for a telegram in a West-end club which has been given over to the pail-and-brush mechanic for autumn renovation is not an ideal pastime for an epicure and a man of fashion. To be compelled to sit and yawn in an atmosphere of size and varnish, in halls temporarily tenanted by voluble and irascible

artisans to whom one's very presence in the month of holidays and deserted streets is sufficient evidence of one's constitutional bent for shifting the cut on the working classes, is singularly tortuous. Blobs of whitening are apt to fall in perilous proximity to one's coat; jets of slopwash descend suddenly in hazardous contiguity to one's hat, until one grows in time to jump aside for one's very life out of the line of a swinging platform, or the range of a falling trestle, at the faintest echo of "Stan' by the sidebar rope, Josh!" or "Lower your endabit, Bill!"; yet for more than half a week Lord Caedmon bravely faced it all.

Then at last there came a wire. It was coded from the fair town whose name is so unpleasantly suggestive of cannibalistic intolerance of chastity—"Nuneaten, 5.24 P.M."—and it ran:

"Little parcel will arrive Euston to-night, 8.30, legibly inscribed Fragile."

It bore no signature, not another word; that was all. Yet Caedmon, as he read it forty times, felt the sunshine penetrate his soul anew. There arose before his eyes a vista of a refined and beautiful girl in white Mechlin lace and orange-blossoms, turning from a chancel filled with tulips and palms and begonias and white hyacinths, on all of which the soft rose light filtered in through

a great stained east-window, to—to cast all aside for a vulgar assignation at a railway station! “Fragile” was not the word for it: it was frail beyond the limit of human comprehension.

With Lorna’s self-reproachful adjective inscribed upon his brain, Caedmon jumped into a cab and drove to the most intensely respectable hotel in Berkeley Square, an establishment so finnickingly exclusive that its maitre would hardly look at gold and lands unless tendered by one who had previously submitted references; and ordered dinner. Surely, he reasoned, if Lorna, for the old love’s sake, were willing to incur this peril, she should be dragged to no ostentatious Palm Room, nor exposed to the leers of *hoi polloi* in the best-accredited “smart” restaurant. “Fragile!” Sweet vestal! Though she clearly realised the ineffable jeopardy in which the promptings of her heart involved her, her innate sense of culture made her shrink from the use of the meaner, but more appropriate vulgarism, “risky!”

Long before his time, and with the stealthy step of an ogre on his way to rob a cradle, Lord Caedmon alighted from a muffled brougham, passed beneath the frowning arch of Euston Station, and awaited the coming of the restaurant train from Warwickshire. And no sooner had it slid silently in, than the door of a reserved-first opened, and Lorna Porter, apparently in

evening dress, but completely enveloped in a travelling cloak and hood of soap-sud grey, stepped out. Caedmon positively pounced upon her.

"How fearfy good of Twee-est to come!" he cried, taking both her hands in his.

"Oh, not so *vewy* fearfy, my twee," answered Lorna, for she too was an adept in the pidgin; adding with a wicked wistfulness in her great brown eyes, "though Twee-est would get awfy, *awfy* ratin' if pals found out, and Twee-est is scary of ratin'!"

"Twee-est let ratin' go hang; Twee give Twee-est deevie ickle dinnie, and Twee-est buck-up!" said Caedmon, consolingly; by which time they were mercifully at the brougham. But the same conversational fog enveloped his intellect throughout a long and elaborate dinner, and it was not until Lorna, who was quite a red-corpuscled person when she wished to be, had waited for it to lift until the coffee and liqueurs came, that she wondered whether it might be that he was squiffy. Not that such was the case at all, dear. In reality, he had brooded over her password "Fragile" until he had brought on a series of neurotic attacks which the French would call collectively *le petit mal*. At Market Harboro, two years ago, I had a hunter, a rare fleabitten grey, similarly affected. The unfortunate beast remembered having one day.

staked himself on a thickset hedge, so that ever afterwards when he came to one, he dropped his ears, screwed his head slightly to the right, and, with wide-open eyes and tail erect, squatted. Caedmon's bleat was mild and vapid, but nevertheless regular so long as he prattled of the extraordinary vogue that *pendie* (appendicitis) was having; of the new restaurant being awfully *deevie* (delightful) but deucedly *expie*; of Lord Jimmie being fearfully *diskie* at finding his wife giving him some anti-drink stuff in his coffee at *brekker*, simply because he occasionally got so frightfully *moppie*; but whenever through Lorna's omission to utter a weary, or an acid, "Really?" there came a pause, he caught sight of the one word "FRAGILE!" emblazoned on the wall, and, like my old grey, he died away behind the saddle, and tried to swallow his palate.

Dinner over, Lord Caedmon led Lorna to the Billiard Room where nobody ever went. The place was, as usual, empty and shadowy, whereupon Caedmon instantly—rang loudly for the marker. Neither this servant or Caedmon observed any peculiarity in the demeanour of Miss Porter as she opened the game in effective style by stringing together 17, nor did she pass any remark when she broke down at her next stroke through using the jigger at a very simple, single-cushion cannon. As Caedmon went to the

table, however, Lorna left the room, presumably to chalk her cue or something, and—well, that was the last that was seen of her!

His lordship, suspecting nothing, waited five minutes after taking an ineffective shot, and then lit a cigarette. After ten minutes he grew uneasy, after twelve, a second footman came in and mentioned the fact that “her ladyship” had been gone some little time, in a hansom! As the man ceased speaking and walked away, the dreaded word appeared in letters of fire upon the wall, and the future lord of Atholbrose gasped for breath and clenched his fists.

“I beg y’r lordship’s pardon, but is y’r lordship feelin’ faint; the room is somewhat ’ot?” asked the marker.

“Naw, naw,” groaned Caedmon, in tones strangely Irvingian, “b-b-but tell me, man, what is your personal conception of the meaning of ‘fragile’?”

The man went as pink as a lobster cutlet at Hampton Court, but parleyed, politely:

“Y’r lordship’s pleased to be facetious, but probably y’r lordship’s ’eard ’ow I’ve got the sack over it?”

“Over what, pray?”

“The new spirit-glasses, y’r lordship. I’ve been shockin’ unlucky with ’em I’ll admit, y’r lordship, but oh! they *are* fraygile an’ no kid! That word was stencilled on the case as they

arrived in, an' William, the carver, he says to me at the time, y'r lordship, ' Henry,' he says, ' every time as you handles these glasses,' he says, ' bear that word in mind—Fraygile. It's French,' he says, ' an' it means, " Bound to be Broke, Anyway," ' he says, an' it's my humble opinion, y'r lordship——"

" Enough! My hat and stick, at once!" shouted Caedmon, and strode out of the place. " Of course, of course, fool that I am, I see it all now!" he wailed as he strode up Mount Street; " she referred to her promise to that damned South African!"

Plunging his fists into his breeches pockets and pulling out two brimming handfuls of gold and silver, he thrust them upon an Italian murderer who, though curfew had long sounded, stood churning from an automatic piano the symphony to—

" Will you—be true—to aeies—of blue
When they look into aeies of ba-rown? "

and plunged into the velvet darkness of Grosvenor Square.

Only yesterday I received a lengthy epistle from Mrs Mortimer Toddpush, who left town about a week ago in order to witness the Passion Play at Horitz, but sidetracked at Zermatt after hearing in Paris how Eve, a hussy who also made shell boxes at Bohmerwald, had secretly

married Adam, who also stoked a steamer on the Po, while on tour in the provinces some seven months back, and would now be quite unable to appear for a few weeks. Eve's friend, too, a big shield-tailed python, had been in a state of torpor for an unusually prolonged period after swallowing a tourist from the Highlands, so that the whole show was, if the accurate expression is admissible, clear out of plumb. Beyond the fact that a Reverend Mr Somebody, who was staying at the famous Smearkase Hotel half way up the Matterhorn, had stepped through a back door in the dark and fallen a mile, more or less, down the glacier (though the more pious of the guides assured the rest of the party that the old gentleman would have earned his harp three times over before striking the bottom) there seemed to be nothing doing at Zermatt, more particularly since the chubby bridegroom and touch-me-not bride in whom local interest mainly centred, were not speaking to one another when the post left, having quarrelled as to which loved the other the more, and each being afraid to give in for fear of offending the other.

But this sort of fever usually subsides, I am told, within a month, man's inborn nature being to philander, often to the dire distress of the trustful young wife who fondly imagines that a husband to be constant should be frequent. I remember hearing (no matter how) when last I

was in Brighton—that very stamping ground for honeymooners and others who carry their happiness about with them—of a certain old gentleman who was ventilating, in the smoking-room of one of the hotels, his views upon a current *cause célèbre*. Incidentally he averred that it was all very well for a man to go into the witness-box and swear that he had never under any circumstances been untrue to the partnership entered into at the altar rails; it was better still if he could induce the jury to believe him; yet no married man could absolutely *prove* that he never had sinned—on that point he would freely wager a thirty-shilling hat!

Then there arose from a corner seat a young gentleman who had Percy literally stamped upon him, and who had been unable to keep his cigarette alight for yawning, and he claimed that hat.

“And I invite you to substantiate your claim, sir,” rejoined the pleasant old gentleman.

“Oh, it’s an absolute walk over!” cried Percy, with another yawn, “my wife and I were married only yesterday afternoon, and—er, well, we’ve only just come down to breakfast!”

Highly interesting as this explanation may seem, it was, after all, mere baby food compared to the diverting details which each of the other twenty-seven gentlemen had to invent at a moment’s notice when asked by his wife why *he*

had not instantly and peremptorily laid claim to the thirty-shilling hat.

Speaking of winning wildly sporting wagers, I suppose that all will admit that Society contains no more beautiful or accomplished woman than Lady Ellaline Dives, yet I hate her with a great personal hatred, if only for the mean way in which she welshed—that is the hard but accurate appellation—me out of a fiver at the Cossie's Club only a week before I left England. You know the Cossie's, of course? It was of the parent club of them all that Io Mayleigh (who has emptied her Philistine life of everything but dogs) wrote :

“ Observe the erstwhile Tub Hotel;
Note the ‘ B.T.,’ or tea-room smell;
Ensconced behind its muslin blinds,
Now matrons with contented minds,
Discuss, with much patrician fun,
The tea—the cake—the buttered bun.”

Well, in the course of an impersonal discussion at the Cossie's on the mistakes of anatomy, I, who have fed up on the subject, offered to bet anyone in the room a fiver that she had a vermi-form appendix, and Ellaline Dives took me on. And as soon as the money was posted and covered, we adjourned to the Gazing Room, where she showed us the scar where she had had it removed!

Mightily close to sharpening, don't you think?

I felt much inclined to have her up before the committee; yet, poor thing, she needs the fiver more than I do, for, owing to the fabulous prices paid by our Army in South Africa for petits fours and plovers' eggs, her income will be sorely depleted for the next century or so. I know quite well, dear, that her sweet but small house in South Audley Street—squeezed in between the wine merchant's and the coachbuilder's it looks just about a convenient size for a convivial tomtit—holds so many “auctioneers,” as she calls them, that she and Sir Edward habitually sit on the stairs, owing to the men-in-possession occupying all that remains of the crested saddlebag suite. Even their faithful butler resigned with a curse after jabbing a hole about as big as Pimlico in his left hand, whilst endeavouring to open a sevenpenny tin of sheep's tongue, though Lady Ellaline adroitly arranged with the hospital authorities to inform the Press that it was *gastrodynia*, induced by a surfeit of foie gras. To repair all these ravages, Lady Ellaline lately accepted a roving commission from Messrs Outsize and Squeale, the distinguished hosiers; for if, as she truly says, Lady Barnhowrie can accept an appointment to sell cod liver oil, and the Countess of Barcalwhey can turn her impoverished self into a limited company—oho! Bankers: the Hole Under the Hearthstone!—to supply all who will buy with fresh eggs and butter (which she

delivers daily in her own motors), then "why not your little Ellaline?" Nowanights therefore at the small dance, the man who gets a polka with her must breathe a couple of dozen of silk socks or blue gridiron singlets into her shell-like ear; she will not grant even a galop under twelve fine flannel shirts with tucked or pleated fronts and necks, finished with French muslin collars for six guineas, which (next to her reliable bullet-proof travelling nighties for co-respondents) is her "star" line. It must be anything but the pleasantest of work, however, for I am told that the Duchess of Whitehall handed her a fearful dab in the eye on the Stand on the Champagne Stakes day at Doncaster, simply because she had asked, incautiously but purely in a business way, "Aren't those pink silk pants of the dear Duke's getting woefully shabby?"

Excepting only the two or three English theatrical hussies who purposely return from the water to the wrong bathing tents—Number 12 instead of Number 21, and so on—with the deliberate intention of being suddenly discovered by some brilliantined and bearded fool of a Frenchman, whom they then send to fetch from their rightful disrobing places, garments which are supposed to have no public career before them, we do not bathe at Dinard: rather do we diligently "sand." To actually enter the dishevelled surf is to display an excess of zeal only

equalled by the cock who crowed himself overboard from the bowsprit of Lord Dufferin's yacht in his frantic attempts to salute the rising sun in Scandinavia; but I think if only you could have seen me walking the plank promenade on the *plage* this morning in a skin-tight silk suit of bereavement violet, with silk stockings to match and chrome strapped shoes with paste buckles, you would have admitted, in disagreement with the *passé* soprano who budded too late, that there are other ways of securing public attention besides giving lessons on the posthorn from the top of Nelson's monument. For a girl to simulate a pretence of using the hot sea-water footbath which is brought to her from the beach-cauldron on returning to her *cabinet de bain* is surely less fuzzy than the male Berkshire pretence of kissing all the pretty women and extorting silver from the men under the name of "Hocktide tutty" (and you can safely bet a level pony if the custom had been to get the money out of the women and kiss the men, it would have been entombed with Alumid, whose last favourable Press notice appeared in the Domesday Book!); and neither puritanical flam nor structural imperfections need stand in the way of her extending the joyous mitt to her pals to join her in a cigarette in her machine, since the floor and the seats are never, like those of the archaic Margate article, so soaking wet that you cannot sit down

without ruining your *création*. Unfortunately the French jump too precipitately at conclusions, and, though it takes a pretty good deal at any time to create surprise at a Gallic watering-place, a distinctly false and an altogether too comprehensive impression of pudic British maidenhood has been indelibly stamped on the minds of the irrepressible *gommeux* here through one of their number having politely inquired of one of the copper-haired drabs on the steps of her obscure hotel the other morning if there was anything that he could do for her, and received the reply :

“ Oh, it's very sweet of you, old dear, but if you'd give us a kiss, stand us a bottle, tell us an easy blue story, and take us into the Casino to show us how to play those ' little horses,' I should take it pal-ish, for what with your croupiers speakin' so quick and usin' their rakes so handy, all as I seem to do is to plank down my quid and take up nothing ! ”

Not that they really are ignorant of *petits-chevaux* and *roulette*, of the conventions of continental hotel life or—anything else ! for, only yesterday, having received but few visitors, one of them took a camel-hair brush and a bottle of boot-varnish, and deftly inscribed upon her door the double-zero, and, within the next five minutes——

But the tiny red-brown fishing-boat which has

been threading its way between the pygmean rocky islets in the bay, now touches the beach, whither I fly to glean new schemes of colour from the glint of the dying mackerel.

Tiens, kid,

VIOLA.

EPISTLE V

EATON SQUARE, *Tuesday, October 31^d.*

MY DEAR PATRICIA,—

Let me implore you at the outset to repress the hilarity which any reasonable person must naturally feel at the sight of a quite unexpected letter in my familiar handwriting, for I am in no joking mood to-day. In short, there have been ructions here; I have read them the Riot Act with the stringbark on it and locked myself in my own apartments; for, even if I had entertained no thought of melting to-morrow before the warm rays of a tear-blotted cheque for the price of a new dinner frock, there is something so incomparably more dignified about an exit with dilated nostrils and a defiant snort than in a meek slink-off in the soul-grilling fit of remorse which is bound to follow a return to baneful Belgravia from so sweet a living toy as Dinard.

And what, pray, had *I* to do with the fact

that reliable domestic servants were not to be got; what (advancing another pace) that, even when captured occasionally, they rapidly became unreliable in a household where, when Rio Tinto's stood at 62, an operatic artiste arose from the floral centre-piece of a banquet served with Roman splendour and sang the menu, course by course; while, two days later, when Rio's dropped to one-and-eight a quire, "the Poor Rates put in" and pinched the very dining table? No Countess in the Peerage who habitually had less than seventy men staying in the house at the same time could possibly get servants to accept such elementary principles of give and take! But it was when Féo rorted me upon my frequent absences from her house—"her house," my griefs!—that the proud chieftain's daughter moulted an eagle's feather.

"And a model house it is, madam!" I cried, with the withering bitterness of the impoverished nobleman whose I.O.U. for a-pint-and-two-slices had been scorned by the korfy-stall keeper, "a mighty regular and methodical house! 'Its many virtues, too humorous to mention,' lie in the broken decanter at the foot of your dressing-table, the gold kid Court slipper behind the dining-room clock, the bottle of Odol on the drawing-room hearthrug; or they are to seek among the tennis balls in the music case, in the nest of mice beneath the broken wires of the piano, or in the

sanitary dustbin wherein profane hands deposited my treasured button from Jan Kubelik's dress waistcoat! Od's, hog's puddings and hung beef! if the house round the corner in Lower Belgrave Street of the motherly old lady in the black satin skirt and the red velvet bonnet, who got three months last Saturday, was a more 'disorderly' house than this is, then my reason's twisted and my name's M'Gizzick!"

Here, locked in my vestal chamber which is sufficiently contiguous to the kitchen to afford that peculiar atmosphere of internecine culinary warfare familiar to all inhabitants of Flatland, will I dip into the Diary which I found upon the boat between St Malo and Southampton, and which, very curiously, refers to the three giddy gushers of the obscure hotel at deevie Dinard. It is obviously in the handwriting of a married man of the middle station, whom a vagrant generosity would impel to look into shop windows at articles ticketed "Suitable present for a barmaid" and whom a deeper-rooted penuriousness would incite to haggle with his wife at parting as to his share of the expense of framing and glazing the judicial separation order which she has obtained against him; and, roughly pencilled in a scribbling book, it runs—

Monday, Sept. 1st.—It is now nine days since any caller other than a dun or a peddler of washleathers has entered my office, the last prospective client of good intent having

been Mr Asphalte, the famous turf-accountant from the lamp-post at the corner of Bucklersbury. His suggestion that I should receive telegrams on his behalf, also ninepence in the £ out of the Sender's losings, I foolishly declined to entertain, over-estimating, probably, the value of the commission which I had just received from Miss Béguinette Strathcona, of Broad Court Mansions, to find her a sober and presentable "mother" for Thursday afternoon next, when she has to interview the family solicitors of the Earl of Guerusey, who is settling five thousand a year upon her on condition that she never misses the last bus, or something. The young Earl would probably have married the bird could he have broken her of her artless habit of joining in the choruses whenever he took her to a music hall; though the interesting fact remains that what will lose a deserving girl a nobleman's partnership will not necessarily cost her his patronage. But where the brimstone is my personal discomfort to end? If I attempt to go across to the "Green Man" I shall get a judgment-summons on the way, and if I don't go across to the "Green Man" I shall die of thirst; meanwhile—Somebody in the outer office! Will you step in, please? Well, well, well! May I be—er, yours and so forth; my old chums Billie Bunn and Dickie Scales! This is the sort of meeting that makes work for barmen; say, boys, were there any signs of a seedy old devil with a black leather bag around the doorway as you came in? No? Then all is quiet in the Shipka Pass. Come across the road!

Tuesday, Sept. 2nd.—My oath! there were no bottle-green winged insects on last night as a model of a quiet, intellectual little evening, but—I really do wish that I could rest my head for awhile on something extremely soft and yet intensely cold. Rather took their hind wheels off, I think, by the way I mixed the Moselle cup! Absolutely astonished myself; though it only shows you what you could do if you could command the materials. Am rather

taken with the Run-across-to-the-Republic—(*Vive l'drapeau rouge!*)—notion, too, and don't see why I *shouldn't* go as their joint guest, seeing that they have won an independency at old Ebor; and more especially since I have volunteered to stake them to three little Broad Court chorus chicks, neighbours of Béguinette's, that I hear have gone to Dinard. Heigho! Had *some* men but one-fifth of what any successful stockbroker would consider an absurdly insufficient income, what pure *jouisseur's* would some men be; a bit pale in the morn, perhaps, but growing ripe as luncheon time arrived, and rubicund at eve with the rubicundity that comes only of repeated "splits." Funny thing I should dream only last night that I was counting money!

Wednesday, Sept. 3rd.—The Channel a positive dream—even though I have to close one eye to make out the shipping with any distinctness. We should hear considerably less about "the sinful artificiality of modern life," it some of the pessimists had, like myself, an occasional opportunity to make up for lost time. Man can't have a "past" if he doesn't possess the cash to overtake it. My vivid descriptions of the three birds are truly amazing—seeing that I barely remember one of them! There's Effie, who used to correspond regularly with a pal of mine until the G.P.O. people chipped in and forbade it on the ground that her letters scorched holes in the mail-bags. There's Connie, who fairly electrified the young bloods when she came on with a copper can in the second act of *Sweet Nancy*, and asked "Hot water, sir?" quite inimitably, and whom Sir Charles Muckcross would have married in spite of his family, but for the persistency with which Effie's fool of a grey parrot kept on shouting one evening, "No, Georgie, not to-night!" Finally there's the dark one whose name I can't remember, but she's particularly hunky-perdoodlum, has Spanish blood in her veins—oh, I rubbed it into them until their only trouble was that they couldn't

bribe the captain of the boat to send the girls a Marconi to get busy with their curling-tongs and turn up at the ferry to meet us.

Thursday, Sept. 4th.—Dinard. Déjeuner'd on arrival at the Hotel Steak and Vedge—no, no, Chateaubriand—where Billie and Dickie sate and sipped the liqueurs which add so much to autumn's rich content, whilst I went in search of the birds. Discovered them at a small hotel by the Casino, and introduced myself—no blistering task in a place where you meet a little sideline in the surf at noon, and call on it at its hotel not more than twenty minutes later; but they're no sparkling revelations. So far do they fall short of my word-pictures painted aboard the boat, that I am fain to invent, on my way back to the Steak and Vedge, dramatic endings for the fabled Effie, for Connie from dreamland, for the dark 'un. She that needed the asbestos notepaper, I announce, purchased a 200 franc robe-de-nuit, renovated her visiting cards with benzine, and returned to England yesterday, her solicitor having called her attention to the fact that the last of her debts was barred by the statute of limitations on the 30th ult.; Connie had been sandbagged in error by a near-sighted French gentleman, who had since taken advantage of the low rates between Havre and New York to start for America on the day fixed for his marriage with his landlord's daughter; the dark 'un with the tar in her system had just entered a convent after secretly wedding an assistant-something in the Niger Protectorate, who had imprudently disembarked among a wrong tribe, and been eaten on his honeymoon. The gorged but affable indifference with which these details are received by Billie and Dickie is heightened rather than dispelled when I escort them to call on the blondines, and I begin to regret that in a febrile, ebullient moment I suggested that their ancient and moustached landlady—obviously also the Perpetual Lady President of the Norman Branch of the Anti-Savon and Water Society—might hold herself

in readiness for a little dinner for six at sunset. The more so since Heine's dictum that rich men are so unhappy that they need benevolent institutions to mitigate their misery, breeds no false joy in the breast of the Bucklers-buryite in Dinard with only one-and-eight and a feeding appointment with a tall, blonde kid, with whom he has already exchanged a labial kiss, though assured by her that if her "people" ever suspected that she done such they would feel, as sore as proselytes to Judaism about it.

The Same, 9 P.M.—Two hours have passed since we should have called and fed the canaries; meantime Billie Bunn has been outed by a *bouillabaise* that looked like Westgate at low water, and smelt stronger than a pearl-fishing lugger, and Dickie Scales has not been sober since 3.15. Some philosophy there is which holds that except to give an order, the greatest sin is to execute it; I do devoutly trust that Mère Jeanniot, the bearded *hostesse*, is a practical disciple of this creed; but what of my little prize pausy, Irene Treadwater? My brain works luminously enough till the wronged Irene and the misery of my one-and-eight enter it. How mutable a thing is man! He starteth, bent on opening a bale of Roman orgies on the noble lines laid down by Petronius Arbiter; he windeth up on streaky bacon, fried on a shovel in a cabmen's shelter! I should have known by now, I must tell Irene, with simulated chafing, that Cupid could not operate in a crowd; I must make it my personal business to see that she gets the leading part in one of the best of the coming provincial pantomimes: I must send her a real Norfolk turkey, also a motor car, for Christmas. Heartily sick of the whole business, yet anxious to get out of it as politely as possible, I leave my feeble friends and start for the abode of offended beauty.

Much Later.—I am back from their hotel. The birds had risen, in mastodonic wrath, and gone, but—Mère Jeanniot was there. My monstrous "might-have-waited"

bluff—femininity in its most fatuous phase—she fathomed at a glance, and conspuez'd (and worse'd) me as heartily as though I had been the town liar. Much that she said outdistanced my Ollendorf, but her text, I gathered from a phrase here and there, was that axiomatic dictum of the incensed fair, "I like a man to be a man"; whereupon, angered but always a gentleman, I shouted, with great restraint, "Shut up, *sale bête!* I am an Englishman, and Englishmen perform their promises!" "Poo-poo! poo-poo!" snarled the hag, with considerable sarcasm; "if so that be, where then are your friends, the other Englishmen?" Countered, I wavered for an instant, then, reckless in my desperation, I fired the temporal and banal lie, "Not a bit of it: *they* were no Englishmen!" Momentarily her parchment brows were knit, her bristling eyebrows raised. "Not Engleeshmen?" cried she, "pray what then were they?" "AMERICANS!" I cried, with happy inspiration, and for a few minutes the ogress's revengeful dial relaxed, and my only fear was that she would embrace me. But her puzzled look gave way at length: the shadows gathered again, and she cried, "*A bas, monteur! Non, non, deceive am I not thus to be! For did not l'homme Américain visite Mademoiselle Irène but yesterday, and was not he as is your chapeau, black—très, black? Decidement, jeune homme, vous voulez—*" But I fled; moreover, I leave this mill to-morrow, grist or no grist. Dickie Scales is pulling round, and sends to say—

But here the entry ends abruptly.

Pessimists of the smart set are shaking their heads with ill-concealed mirth over Lady Hilda Chinewood's diminishing prospects of ever getting a decree *nisi*, a speculation into which she has already heroically socked about three thousand pounds of her winnings since Goodwood, with

little prospect, so far, of securing any return. For Lord Percy continues to lead a blameless life in the Bloomsbury garret to which Hilda's dole of thirty shillings a week confines him, despite the promise, wrung from him with many tears and threats, to be guilty of the technical "misconduct" which the law insists upon. With no assets save two pairs of patent-leather boots ready to be sent to be soled and heeled, he sits and smokes cigarettes all day, carelessly, unconsciously forcing upon poor Hilda the conviction that worldly happiness is a wild singing-bird which may not be caught and tamed. He certainly refrains, with the gentlemanly consideration of our common forefather, Adam, from attacking the previous character of the lady, but he has already jotted down in lead-pencil on the back of the citation the seven separate grounds of justification which he intends to plead in defence of his having married her. And they are:—

1. The weather at the time was beastly cold and uncongenial.
2. The roads were confoundedly sloppy.
3. Respondent could not afford two guineas a day for a cab; and
4. Respondent's walking boots admitted water in large quantities.

5. Respondent's chest was weak, and his doctor had ordered him "generous living."
6. Respondent was unable to obtain same, he having signally failed to get his paper done, even with the endorsements of "A. de Rothschild," "W. W. Astor," and "A. Carnegie," though he has since been informed that poor dear old Sam recognised the shade of ink in use at the "Blue Posts."
7. Process-servers at the instance of (1) Messrs Bellamy Brothers; (2) Messrs Warren and Craik; (3) Messrs Justerini and Brooks, already penetrated to respondent's bedroom.

Lady Hilda, whose ineradicable habit of making love to every man she meets has turned out such particularly sour pickles on her, fatuously imagined that a woman who could hold her own with the bookmakers upon a racecourse would be more than a match for a lazy, feminine, Carlylean boy who falls asleep directly after dinner whenever he has been out in the fresh air during the afternoon, and she took him against everyone's advice. At Lincoln they were closer than onions on a string; but between the Grand National and the Guineas, her infatuation waned to comparative boredom, and, by Epsom, boredom had given way to positive loathing. At

Ascot he proved a hopelessly out-of-date dervish; and she brought him to the London Cup at Alexandra Park only because she had lately discovered a particularly smart cabman, called "Mint-sauce Fred," on the Wilton Road rank, and the man seemed inclined to get too pally. But the climax came at Goodwood, where Hilda had looked forward to a very big week, not only because tips to servants are expected to be lavish, but by reason of the subsequent draining month's "rest," in which nerves and glands and organs and muscles have to be renewed, while one is not winning a single steeper.

The mid-day sun had spurred back the morning haze peculiar to the Southdowns, as Hilda and her marital incubus drove up the hill to Goodwood, from where Lavant lay buried in the quiet bosom of the woods. To any woman whose cheval-glass had spoken as eloquently on the subject of white serge as Hilda's had done, it should have been a day, if not of triumph, still of heavenly peace; yet the rapturous song of the lark and the happy droning of the bees only served to accentuate the misery of her merciless matrimonial mistake and dangle it before her eyes. It was maddening only to think of what she must endure during the next four days with the highly-necessary bookmakers on the one hand and the utterly unprofitable mature male suckling on the other. When the carriage

drew up at the wicket-gate, Hilda was at boiling point, and, turning to the right and leading the way into the plantation of elms and beeches, beneath the boughs of which full half a thousand powdered lackeys unpacked huge hampers of damask napery and shimmering glass and glistening silver, she cried aloud with withering scorn to the lord and master she despised :

“ Now, dog, which tree will you sit under while I go and get you your living ? ”

Stung to the quick, whatever that may be, Percy, like Cambronne, hissed but a single word; the next instant strong but servile hands were hauling him out of the wreck of the Duke of Ravensbury's cold collation, and five score of astonished onlookers realised that if a hand only does take $5\frac{3}{4}$ in white suède gloves, it is astounding how hard and how straight it can hit. By what subterfuge he, being practically penniless, contrived to return to town is not known, but as he was last seen entering a small calico tent on which was legibly inscribed “ ACCOMMODATION,” it is reasonable to assume that he had recourse to these nomadic, but extremely convenient, financiers of the racecourse for the purpose of raising upon his gun-metal watch a small sum sufficient to pay his railway fare to London; meanwhile, as “ language ” is constructive “ cruelty ” in the eye of the law,

Hilda will probably pursue Percy on the first day when there is no racing, and hit him again.

But, speaking of nomads, what an extraordinary vogue the Bond Street fortune-tellers are enjoying! Clairvoyantes is, perhaps, the more acceptable term, though no two of the visionists acknowledge the same denomination nor pursue the same mystic methods. Thus, Madame Hagar, of Grafton Street, poises a crystal ball upon a flower vase, while Madame la Moravie, of Bruton Street, toys only with the subject's finger-tips. Again, Madame Belisardas Brown, of Clifford Street, psychometrises over a lady's glove, whereas Madame Teresona Topping, of Cork Street, her sister—(and many believers in the "blood-thicker-than-water" aphorism readily allow Belisardas and Teresona to be thicker than both put together)—has been known to call loudly for, and even detain, a gentleman's trousers. It is, after all, the observant and intelligent crossing-sweeper at the corner who crystallises all the clairvoyancy that has come under his notice into, "'Ere, it's this way: Laidy arrives in a bro'um—Interval o' two minnits—Toff drives up in an 'ansom. 'Cleer-voyancy' yer calls it? Well, I'm—tongue-tied!"

It was as late as half-past eight the other evening, when all the world was supposed to be at dinner, that Captain Throatlash, the gallant

society playwright who, should his country suddenly require his presence, would be quite prepared to tread the icy Steppes of Russia in his dress pumps, ascended Madame Hagar's little dark staircase in Grafton Street, and awaited with some impatience the arrival of Lady Constance Edenhall. Each wished, from perfectly innocent and dissimilar motives, no doubt, to consult the oracle; the Captain, possibly, because he had an appalling access of dramatic work to get through in which the present state of affairs in the Far East constituted a perpetual menace to his personal peace; Lady Constance, perhaps, because she feared to order a new evening frock before ascertaining if it be true that, according to all the bibles, vedams, and alcorans of the Rue de la Paix, the waist-line is shortly to vanish entirely. But Lady Constance was shockingly late; indeed it was not until 8.49 that the noble Captain, hearing the stairs squeak, arose quickly from his chair, and pulling open the door beheld—Lord Huntley Edenhall!

"Hullo, Reggie, old sportsman!" cried his lordship, genuinely surprised, "why, 'what the blazes attracts a chap like you to such a peep-show as this?"

"Fact is, dear lad," replied Reginald Throatlash, "my little woman left her—er—*umbrella* either here or elsewhere this morning and I called in on the off-chance of hearing of it.

Same time I'd have laid a million to one against meeting *you* here? "

" Yes—er—well," drawled Lord Huntley, wondering if the kid from Daly's could possibly have been such a silly little devil, after his most explicit instructions, as to go to the *other* Grafton Street in the wilds of Fitzroy Square; " it's a dam funny coincidence, don't ye know, but *my* little missis was here this morning, too, in order to—er—er, see if the—er, magic ball, could indicate the present whereabouts of her long lost—er, lucky pig—yes, yes, her *lucky pig*, and I just dropped in to inquire in what manner the—er, miraculous crystal had acquitted itself of the mandamus of confidence she had given it. But, of course, it's all tommy-rot, isn't it? "

" With all deference, I think *not*," replied Throatlash, with the impudent reassurance of one who has suddenly spotted the way out of the maze, " I may, indeed, tell you, quite soberly and seriously, that I not only believe in, but actually practice, these occult sciences, and I have already attained sufficient power in them to compel at will—mark me, Huntley, I say again, compel—the attendance of any living person within the salt boundaries of the British Isles. Let me give you a demonstration: name somebody? "

" G'wan! You don't mean it, surely? "

" Never was more in earnest in my life: come, name somebody? "

"Right oh, old sporty; take your pick,—Hackenschmidt—Tolstoi—that little girl that keeps the humming-top stall at the Exhibition—the captain of the *Pinafore*—Marie Corelli—Sunny Jim——"

"Tut, tut!" ejaculated Throatlash, pettishly, "I did not invite you to play the fool."

"Nor did I invite you to take me for one, Throatlash, please remember *that!*" retaliated Lord Edenhall, hotly.

"I have done nothing of the kind. I shall proceed, as I said, to demonstrate——"

"Nonsense, nonsense!" cut in Edenhall. "You are talking as though you were the bird-cage-man at the music-halls. Is it intoxication or indigestion: drink or only a dressed-crab? Because——"

"It is neither, sir, neither!" shouted Throatlash, "I mean to make you admit——"

"Don't shout at me, sir," interposed Edenhall, imperiously. "Remember never to raise your voice to a gentleman unless your house is on fire."

"I ask your pardon," apologised Throatlash, with magnificent bitterness; then swallowing his choler with all the desperation of an emu taking down a football, he bowed like any shopwalker and humbly begged that, as a parting favour, his erstwhile friend would answer him one question—one only. Was the admirable Lady

Constance at present at home at Grosvenor Gardens?

"Not this evening," laughed Edenhall, with amused contempt.

"H'm. Is it too much of me to ask where she may be?" continued Throatlash, mildly, yet not without confidence.

"It's twice as much as you had permission to ask," replied Lord Percy, wearily, "but I don't mind gratifying your vulgar curiosity: Lady Constance is presiding over a Watercress Mission, at Battersea."

"IS she?" screamed Reginald Throatlash, his bloodshot eyes flashing their resentment as, throwing up his arms and becoming a human ikon, he executed a rapid series of cabalistic calisthenics as though he were drawing from the ceiling itself the invisible fishing-nets of Wynken, Blynken, and Nod. Then in dramatic tones he cried, "Approach, Constance Isobel Bobitwell Edenhall!" and before the echo of his voice had time to die away, or Mother Hagar could withdraw her affrighted countenance from between the curtains which masked the inner chamber, a familiar footfall sounded on the creaking stairs and—in strode the Lady Constance Edenhall!

"Now, sir," bellowed Throatlash, rushing up to the beautiful woman who stood, mute, pale and with dilated eyes, and grasping her chin before her wholly unaffected stupor should turn

to hysterics, “*now*, sir, what about your ‘drink and dressed-crabs’; *now*, sir, what are the extreme odds that you offer about ‘the birdcage-man at the music-halls,’ eh?”

“Marvellous! Stupendous! I am whacked to the world!” exclaimed Lord Percy, extending his hand. “Old friend, I ask ten thousand pardons; if you have no better place to lunch at to-morrow, will you——”

“Softly, softly, do not wake her; we can talk of lunch some other time,” said the magnanimous Throatlash. “Take her home quietly and hand her over to her maid, lest the shock affect her brain. Good-bye.”

Ever of thee,

VIOLA D.

EPISTLE VI

EATON SQUARE, *Tuesday, Novr. 3rd.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

Though there mercifully exists for all who like yourself lack brains, the consolation of religion, you have too long denied yourself the diversion of consulting Mother Hagar, for the police called upon her yesterday; and all that is to be seen in her deserted room to-day is the ivy garland which she sometimes wore, smiling in pathetic significance from the dirty hearthstone upon which it fell when the rough-and-tumble started. When Hagar assumed her flame-coloured robe this morning it was, *alás!* her final assumption; the taking down of her raven locks, her antepenultimate take-down. None know definitely who “put her away”; probably her own recklessness, born of undreamt of success, was the chief cause. Her sugared impertinences went down well enough for a while, but she should have been more

careful to master the art of walking on eggs without breaking them before the gin began to tell on her. Quite likely is it that her dissolution was brought about through her foolishly promising some billowy-bosomed barmaid enjoyments and sensations which are dogmatically denied to the working-classes; or she may have carelessly given to some married women being sued by her dressmakers, the address of a millionaire who had been three months dead and buried; or there is yet one other possibility :

I daresay you remember (for the sequel is too long to go into the preceding sentence) the celebrated cause of Smith *versus* Smith and Dounecastle, the reports of which caused more than one bursting society bud of three seasons ago to recant Rosetti and embrace the *Evening Standard*? Also how, as soon as a long-empanelled jury, that was fading visibly for want of fresh air and red meat with gravy, had recorded its verdict and, rising as one man, had warmly complimented Mr Smith on regaining his freedom from wedlock with a woman with whom marriage was so entirely superfluous, the simple old peer bigamously married Mrs Smith at a registry office, foolishly committing perjury for the purpose? Well, he has since become the father of two girl babies—at least, so their mother says, but you never can tell—and as a son and heir was more ardently to be desired and something

of the kind was daily imminent, he last week sought to ease his mind by consulting Madame Hagar.

Much that she told him—as, for instance, that he would go to the Empire and meet a tall “spade” girl who had been insulted by her landlady and was going to move round into Winchester Street as soon as she could afford it; that, in another large building, of Moorish architecture, he would speak to a “heart” girl with blue eyes, who would look ten years worse for wear than when he last saw her in ’99, and she also would allude to money matters, being urgently pressed for a sufficient sum to bury her deceased mother, to send her invalid little sister on a sea voyage, and to replace eight pounds belonging to another girl which the slavey had stolen from the vase on the mantelpiece; finally, that while riding in a public, white conveyance towards an *al fresco* entertainment with military bands and boats, he would pinch the knee of a perfect stranger and ultimately undertake a journey with her—was doubtless true, but highly irrelevant; it is the nature of necromancers, however, to prevaricate. Eventually she discerned within the crystal a fleeting current event, and cried :

“Yes, yes! All is over—thirteen—fourteen, fifteen, sixteen; the gods on high Olympus have once more frosted you from head to foot—

seventeen, eighteen, nineteen; it is another girl!"

"Too bad to be true! Too bad to be true!" gasped the peer, with a dreadfully dished look in his eyes as he collapsed into a curule chair made out of a beer-stand. "For heaven's sake have another look, missis?"

In mute obedience, the harridan burnished the crystal globe with her flannel sleeve and peered into it again, but she only shook her head dolefully. Then did a none too opulent son of a marquis, whose future seemed to consist mainly in populating the burlesque stage of 1922, steer straight for his club, there to wallow in old brandy as only one can whose simple faith in all mankind has been mercilessly arm-locked and thrown clear off the mat.

Judge, then, of the Earl's great joy next morning when the club servant who restored him to consciousness with prussic acid, showed him in the *Times* the announcement of the birth of a son! Imagine also the righteous ire, unequalled even by that of the pious, but somewhat deaf, old lady who threw a water-bottle at Nansen for speaking jokingly of the Equator, with which he started out for Grafton Street to rate the specious charlatan who had clumsily condemned him for four-and-twenty hours to alcohol and blank despair! Nor would the obstinate old thing admit that she was miffed.

Being without a servant, she said, her globes had not been properly polished that morning, and, the crystal becoming somewhat finger-marked and mottled, must account for her making one or two trifling miscues. It is not surprising if at boiling point old Dounecastle petitioned the police to blue-pencil Hagar vigorously.

But necromancy is not the new fad you think it, indeed, I have wondered for years how a sensible old gentleman like Victor Hugo, the greatest lyrical poet that France has seen (though some of the more stiff-necked of the Immortals never could forgive his singing "I'm living with mother now" at one of their banquets, and then excusing himself on the ground that the girl looked old enough to be, anyway), ever could have been a wizard's dupe. But it now transpires that he was a mere tool in the hands of the fascinating Comtesse de Camembert, who, detecting in him unmistakable signs of fatty degeneration of the cerebrator, got him at the *planchette*, and, between the Comte, her husband (compelled by his wife to wear a galvanic belt, and wrathfully attributing it to the poet's recommendation) pulling in front, and herself shoving behind, they had poor Victor at logger-heads with his dearest friends nearly all of the time. The charming Comtesse, of whom contemporary writers speak as having been "all

there and full measure," and whom the jealous Comte would probably have divorced had she not been the only woman in Paris who understood how to cut his corns properly, obtained such complete control over the cheery old poet that, whenever he received his quarterly envelope from his publisher, his only way of reserving it for his own use was to bury it behind the shrubbery, or leave it in his locker at the Turkish Bath. Otherwise the delightful lady, whose great-grandfather (more to the shame of her great-grandmother) was of royal blood, thought nothing of sending to the Rue de la Paix for a new lilac *Samedi-à-Lundi* turn-out, and then crying scornfully to Victor, as she shoved Virot's bill under his nose, "Have you got the sand to endorse that?" Nine times out of ten he did so, for the Comtesse, tall and slender as a young poplar, was an imposing figure, when well frocked, for a struggling man of letters to be seen about with after the bright-lights had dawned and cab fares were doubled; moreover, the couple had an amiable and economical understanding between themselves by which she invariably chalked up their little dinner at Paillard's to her husband, while Hugo's own visiting-card was always good for two fauteuils at any of the houses where they were not playing to over much money.

All this was long, long ago, dear, yet many

persons believe to this day in the *planchette* as a means of increasing the value of handwriting from a scientific standpoint; indeed, only last July young Monty Clondalkin (who got his troop at Hounslow after heroically suppressing a civilian riot, caused by an electric car conductor's refusal to allow an elderly native lady to ride as far as Twickenham, without paying full fare for a hive of live bees which she was carrying in her lap; the man contending that the hive should have occupied a seat, even if the bees had been left to select their own seats, or stand; but who, with countervailing misfortune, had to retire on half pay after being dangerously hit in the antipodes of his face by a paleozoic boulder from a jingal during the firing of a *feu de joie* by our allies at Thibet) was telling us at dinner one night of a very striking manifestation which he himself had witnessed. Knowing that he could catch nothing which he hadn't had about twice already, he boldly visited in a one-roomed cellar somewhere off the Euston Road, a certain Madame Ingomar, and, having straddled the ante, asked how to gain the lasting affection of the girl he loved and was to meet at Henley. The reply from the other world, via *planchette*, ran: "Win a million on Egyptian Beauty at Alexandra Park, and let her look at it"; and, though he had to lay eight millions to one *on*, dear, he brought it off!

This so impressed me with the virtues of the little board that, in the week before Goodwood, being sick of the sweet sisterhood which sticks to the Plantation, and yet needing the golden pinions with which to fly to the Ring, I hunted up dear old Phyllis Waring, who has made it up with Eustace, and is "living in Knightsbridge in a delightful flat whose back windows overlook the Park, and begged her to get a *planchette* between us. Neither she nor I had the faintest notion where such things were sold, but after much searching, Phyllis found one in a small *bric-à-brac* shop in that queer neighbourhood which lies between the Royalty and Palace theatres, where Madonna-like ladies, attired chiefly in white tarlatan chemisettes, peep out of upper windows, and where black bearded men loll about the doorways of little pink and gold restaurants as though perpetually waiting for something to happen. Did not the Reverend Somebody, of the Church and Stage Guild, once have a chapel here in which the choristers appeared in tights? I fancy so.

Anyhow, Phyllis no sooner got it home than she summoned me to inspect it—a small wooden disc, dear, resembling nothing so much as an artist's palette. For an alleged novelty, it struck me as being rather soiled and dusty, but Phyllis assured me that we had the veritable thing;

that the ancients knew it well, the two best remembered apothegms of Terence being "You can always make a market with a bear *planchette*," and *Actum ne agas*, or, "Don't overdo it." Upon a small table placed in the centre of the room, Phyllis deposited the little board and switched off the electric light. For several minutes an awful and oppressive stillness reigned, broken only by a faint, half-stifled feminine voice exclaiming, "You *will* marry me, won't you?" which Phyllis said came from the Park at the back, and was no part of the *séance* whatever. Slowly, very slowly, the moments dragged along; then presently there came a slight sound as of a penholder tapping on a pill box, and Phyllis said, hoarsely and in sepulchral tones:

"The spirit of Madame Rachel asks the loan of an ear. She might as well bowl her hoop without wasting our time, I think; what with electric rollers and frown plasters we've got her ticketed as a mummy?"

I nodded assent, and many more moments of silence elapsed, followed by a grating noise as of the run down of a musical box.

"According to the old woman at the shop," said Phyllis, "the spirits notify that it's up to us to tilt back to them."

"Do they take this for a jackpot?" I asked, quite inoffensively.

"Never mind what they take it for," snapped

Phyllis, "let us get them to give us an option in something on the Stock Exchange that is going to go a bit higher."

"Oh, fiddles to *that!*" said I, having no more desire to know anything of the kind than How-to-tell-the-gas-meter, illustrated by diagrams. "Rather get them to slip us the winner of the Steward's Cup?"

Sullenly, Phyllis amended her pleadings and submitted my questions. In about five minutes, during which period the low plumbean purring of a marking-pencil was distinctly audible, there came the click which denotes the termination of a message, and Phyllis, snatching up the prize, carried it out into the light. Bristling with joyous anticipation, I followed, but only in time to hear her swear and see her smash the wooden thing across her knee and pitch it out of the window on to the moonlight prowlers in the Park.

"You were quite right about that dust, Vi," she said, sourly. "I have been lumbered on to a fake that was timed to strike seventeen years ago. The thing napped 'Crafton, win and shop!'"

Did I tell you, I wonder, in my last how those awful people, the Invernairne's, had fallen out again? Everyone is saying how worn and rundown she is beginning to look, and how much better it would be if only she could go away for a time. I don't mean to one of those dreadful

places where seemingly intelligent old gentlemen caterwaul and hide themselves in mignonette beds, and perfectly blameless old ladies disrobe suddenly at the dinner-table and weep copiously into the soup tureen, because they are not as pure and unsullied as new milk-cans, but to some nerve-restoring retreat where she could recuperate without having strangers stare holes in her. Poor Maisie! when she married the middle-aged Invernairne she was quite one of the wits of the smart set, and, if not exactly a belle of letters herself, she had received many and many a bushel from the beaux of literature, principally respecting appointments. Never an ardent advocate of the tied-house system, her cultured soul and innate good taste had rebelled against the constant and vulgar propinquity of matrimony, which she had endeavoured to vary by bolting on seven different occasions with men who were all that could be desired, socially. Her prosaic husband had followed her up on each occasion, however, and, begging her to give marriage a fair and dispassionate trial, had brought her back again and again, until her once pellucid spirit became crushed and broken, and she was no more fun to talk to than a Trappist.

Quite lately she imported from Lausanne a tall, dark Swiss maid who had repented of some early rashness, and vowed that her future life should be one unending struggle against the

promptings of nature. Gowned demurely in some simple clinging material which, as the *Family Herald* says, accentuated rather than hid her graceful outline, Fanchon flitted lightly and swiftly up and down the Invernairne staircases, save when the Earl detained her on a landing to tell her how nicely her new bodice fitted her.

One fine morning at breakfast, the Earl remarked that as his physicians and also his bankers had ordered him to visit a lumber camp in Norway, he feared that he might not be back until the following day, and he felt it was an excellent opportunity, he said, for Maisie to go to bed at the same hour as the canaries, and have a real good rest. Then he called loudly to his man not to forget to pack his snowshoes, his caribou gun, plenty of ground bait for the trout, and disinfectants for the riper riper, and took his departure. That selfsame night, in about the middle watch, poor Maisie, sleeping lightly and nervously, fancied that she heard the stairs creak in a guilty way, and tremblingly got up. Slipping into a tight-fitting lace 'dressing-gown with three deep flounces shooting boldly from below the knees, she crept out upon the stairs in time to see a familiar form, plainly silhouetted in the moonlight, just one flight above her, and still climbing. Invernairne had clandestinely returned!

Though Maisie entertained no Victorian views regarding the fidelity of husbands, and even knew that in clubland several men who had lately allowed their hearts to be true to their Polls, had been expelled on the ground that their conduct was unbecoming gentlemen, the situation seemed so promising of advantage to herself that she instinctively followed the figure, keeping close to the wall, where stairs are quietest. Precisely at the point anticipated, the spectral Invernairne crossed a landing and laid his hand softly upon the knob of the long suspected door. As the handle slowly turned and the door, opening inwards, suffered a strong shaft of light from a cheerful, crackling fire to cleave the darkness—Maisie, poor, impulsive fool, shouted imperiously, “STOP!”

Invernairne, with man’s inborn craft, stopped instantly, and accurately grasping the situation, acted without a moment’s pause. Stopping dead upon the threshold of the girl’s room, he shouted into it angrily:

“How *dare* you burn my coals in this way, you abandoned hussy? Douse that fire with your water-jug immediately, and prepare yourself for a bitter reckoning to-morrow!”

Then, turning back towards the stairs, he gasped the old Criterion gag, “My wife!”

“And pray what brings you here to-night?” Maisie asked, by this time realising how com-

pletely she had sacrificed the position to her own impetuosity.

"Economy, my love, sheer economy," replied the ready liar. "Found, when I got to Hull, that the Wilsons owned the boats and the fare was seven pounds. Far better spend the seven pounds on dear Maisie, thought I, and write to the Wilsons to send me a complimentary pass—perpetual free pass, in fact—besides, the Wilsons would never speak to me again if they ever heard of such a thing as my paying to travel by their line—preposterous! Back then I came—worn, weary, jaded, but self-satisfied—only to behold, on approaching the beloved goal, the unmistakable reflection in the clouds of a huge fire somewhere in my own dwelling. What great good fortune that I had turned back! How Providence provides! I adopted my old trapper tactics—stalking stealthily—from crest to crest—birchbark and woodcraft—aha! And blest if that Swiss hoyden of yours hadn't got a fire half way up her chimney, madam, and Cockerell's charging me thirty-five shillings a ton! Out of this house she goes to-morrow morning, mark that!"

"May the Lord have mercy on your miserable soul!" was all that Lady Invernairne could say as, trembling with suppressed agitation, she motioned him to the spare room and, a moment later, locked him in. And now the very natural

question is What, oh What, will the Harvest be?

I really cannot conclude without thanking you for the hearty laugh you gave me by your humorous inquiry about my "going to the Lord Mayor's Show" next Wednesday. You have evidently not forgotten, dear soul, that the feeblest manifestation of the undying spirit of Thackeray's Jenkins never fails to move me to laughter; but really I prefer to leave to you and your sort the fragrance of the asphalte and the watermen's garments, also the fat and greasy citizens in furs and chains. Fortunately, like the pigs in France which have, since Villon dreamt he was a swine rooting in the streets of Paris, had to keep outside the fortifications, these dear old civic creatures are, like the pigs, only brought into these regions to be bled; and I will wager a fiver that when the worthy alderman who assisted Féo at her flower stall at the last bazaar is taken round to Dover Street to-morrow, he will bow to my opinion that she has not spent the last three weeks getting pinned up in fitting-rooms for nothing!

Thine

VIOLA.

EPISTLE VII

THE LADIES' RAG, *December 3rd.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

All day long there has been ringing in my ears the immortal observation of the extremely fastidious and highly cultured damsel who remarked, you may remember, as she finished her first riding-lesson, "M'yes, the sensation is agreeable enough, but the motion is highly ridiculous," for my morning mail is mainly of those who are hunting the fox. Housed in the Honourable Winnie Brandon's admirable hunting box—the adjective is justified by her many excellent domestic rules, one of which, for instance, is to have a loud gong sbunded in the hall at ten minutes to six each morning, so that when the servants bring up the cups of tea at six precisely, they may find the guests all in their proper rooms and sound asleep—at Melton, are some of the smartest people that ever publicly strained at the most insignificant gnats and

privately swallowed the most enormous camels. Not the least noteworthy among her guests is Lady Sheila Crampton, who since she got to learn the truth about her husband's audacious acquaintance with the Honourable Win, has assiduously made an intimate friend of her, though whether with a view to cut out in her own spouse's affections the beautiful Diana, or to effect an economy by the cheaper and easier method of watching *one* person instead of paying detectives to keep an unflagging look-out on *two*, has not yet been decided in eggshell china circles. Winnie is, to say the least, dreadfully "raw" over the business, though less so, in another sense, than Sheila, who, being unaccustomed to so much occupancy of the saddle, metaphorically moans in mauve ink for a recipe for restoring lost leather. If hot and then cold water, and tincture of myrrh, with a final top-dressing of zinc ointment, will not toughen her cuticle like a sjambok, then has Bermondsey lost her bearings and the fabled jolly tanner his art; but what of the lovers meanwhile? Finding it no longer necessary to "outdistance the poor, unpractised lady and her' equally bothered horse—"a-blowin' like a pair o' June brides," as the first said to the second whip—they may flirt along side by side to the great amusement of the field and the making of much new history.

And Melton has not yet satisfied itself as to

what it was that caused the Honourable Winnie to miss her hunting for the first five weeks of last season, though, with truly ingrowing nerve, it has sought for a whole year to pry open the inscrutable. All it knows is that it saw on one Autumn evening of twelve months ago, a groom with a petrified countenance ride out from the stables of Brandon Towers and through the town, to return, more than an hour later, with the eccentric Dr Moxon from Swanzey Constable.

Though a bunch of five local practitioners, striving to fill out a six-day week, mutely resented the intrusion, old Dr Moxon continued to ride into Melton every afternoon thereafter on the fifteen-year-old pony which was almost beyond its office. With the second week he started sporting a white vest, and a neighbouring parson with elderly daughters thought seriously of asking him to dinner; but none were quite bold enough to risk a throw-down, and the mystery of Brandon Towers remained unsolved.

Five weeks later, as the philosophic old doctor was making a hearty breakfast off a cold grouse which was dead enough to call for disinfectants, a servant announced Lord Willoughby de Sambre, and was in fact followed into the little dining-room by that breezy nobleman.

"Beg a thousand pardons for disturbin' you with the nosebag on, sir," said the peer, whose lachrymal glands indicated early transactions

with brandy and soda, " but I've called to thank you very heartily for all you have done for Lady Brandon, and to ask you to accept this little cheque. Above all, I don't want it known what's been the matter with her; do you mind recording it in your books as small-pox? Thanks, awfully! There's one other little matter, sir. Lady Brandon—to whom I'm, ahem, closely related—tells me your old pony is none too efficient. Now, I'm putting on the rail to you a little red Daimler which will buzz you round and keep you more in touch with events. No—no thanks, you'll get it to-morrow; don't forget—small-pox! "

And Lord de Sambre vanished. Next day, a glistening little spark-waggon, as red as sealing-wax, arrived, and old Dr Moxon there and then christened it, lest he might forget his benefactor's last request, "VARIOLA," and wheeled it into his stable.

As he was in the act of recrossing his garden in the direction of his surgery, the elderly medico beheld a tall, military man with a frozen smile alight from the station fly and advance towards him, hat in hand.

" Ah, my dear Doctor Moxon," he cried, " this is lavender indeed for me! Pray accept this small cheque, miserably insufficient as it is, for all your goodness towards Lady Brandon, my—er, sister-in-law. It's like violating every principle of

gratitude from A to Z to ask a further favour of you, but *do* you mind bein' mum—absolutely G.H.!—as to the exact nature of Lady B.'s indisposition? Could you refer to it as—say bile or green cussedness of some sort? She is awfully sick, by the way, at your having to cover the Cosmos on a perambulating organism too far gone to stand doping, and I'm sending you—oh, fie, fie, I shall take no denials!—a little Panhard that'll skim round the corners like the pictures on the screen. Not a word, not a word; it'll be here to-morrow; but remember—headachy sickness an' all that caper!”

Long after the stranger had taken his departure, the good old doctor in his temporary perplexity scratched the shining pate which offended Nature had tonsured at 69 to resent the overwearing of the halo in all weathers, and gazed at the cheque which still lay where it had fallen on the floor. He could salve his conscience, he reflected, by destroying the superfluous draft; but with the entrancing little green *tonneau* which a railway rustic delivered at the door next morning, it was entirely different. So winsome was the diminutive car, with its fluted varnished bonnet, its bravely burnished lamps, and its intricate and interesting steel gear, that no soul only lately converted to automobilism could possibly have returned it—even had not the princely donor countered even that feasibility by

scrupulously concealing his identity. So Doctor Moxon accepted the situation with the sigh of a philosopher, and, naming the green car "CHLOROSIS" as if by a happy inspiration, he strolled out into the quiet churchyard to try and forget all about the beautiful Lady Brandon among the quaint obituary puffs of the old tombstones.

Returning, much relieved, he was surprised to find a genial elderly gentleman with a ripstoppin face and silk-lined clothes, sitting demurely in the cottage surgery and earnestly endeavouring to become deeply interested in Burckhardt's *Atlas of Electric Cystoscopy*.

"Doctor Moxon, I presume?" said this bland person, laying Burckhardt aside as the old physician entered; and, receiving an affirmative nod, continued: "Of course, my dear sir, you haven't the faintest notion as to who I may be, but it will suffice for me to tell you that I was—er, eh—yes, yes, Lady Brandon's former ward in Chancery—eh, no—tut, tut, how very foolish!—I mean, of, course that she was *mine*—egad, bless her heart, yes!—and—er, in that case you will readily understand how deeply grateful I must feel towards the Galenian genius to whom she probably owes life itself to-day. Meantime, my dear Doctor Moxon, there are one or two reasons—purely private and family reasons—why the world at large should remain in ignorance of the

precise nature of Lady Brandon's indisposition, and I feel sure that you will respect them—aye, that you will even waive personal veracity as well as professional etiquette to oblige a very delightful and charming woman, and—er, eh—be good enough to inform the curious that she has simply been suffering with a very aggravated 'attack of—er, toothache!

“Really, sir——”

“Pray don't interrupt me, doctor!” cried the pippin, warming with enthusiasm; “but it occurred to dear Lady Brandon in all her dental agony—ha-ha, ho-ho!—that your slight, but not inconsiderable, delay in responding to her summons was solely attributable to the poverty of your horseflesh. Now, my dear sir, you mustn't be offended at what I am about to say, but what were formerly luxuries for the few are now necessities for the many, and what a country doctor surely needs is a swift and reliable motor-car. It fortunately happens——”

“Inexplicable! Do you know, sir——”

“Pray allow me to finish—more especially since dear Lady Brandon seems 'to have so accurately divined your necessities. It fortunately happens that, being seldom out of town, I have recently given up my 12 h.p. De Dion world-beater and gone in for a landaulette; but her ladyship no sooner mentioned your old pony than I sent the De Dion to Barker's, who have

refitted it with a delightful custard-coloured brougham body precisely in ' Lord Lonsdale's style, and therefore just the very thing to carry you about a hunting country. It should be here this very evening, and if you will do me the honour to accept—Good gracious, the poor gentleman is overcome! Clearly the tension of the past five weeks has been too much for him. Hi, there—without; come to your master's assistance, somebody! Here, you, my good woman, apply the usual restoratives and—and I will see him at some other time! ”

Like the gentle, medicinal soul that she was, possessing an infallible cupboard-remedy for everything between moths and malaria, the doctor's housekeeper got the old boy round again by the evening and sent him to the “ Lamb ” to stand round at bottle pool as fit as hands could get him, but he wandered up to the station instead and got there just in time to see the yellow De Dion being unloaded from a trolley, under the personal supervision of the husky old stationmaster who had not taken a day off duty in thirty-four years. Privileged by long acquaintance, this venerable youth got off one or two satirical cracks about cert'in people a-goin' ahead lately, and it allus was them as had it as pleaded poverty the loudest—neither of which vulgar personalities would have made the least impression on the amiable healer had not

the man in blue and braid wound up with, "An' only this afternoon, when the 4.57 stopped here, His Grace the Duke o' Croxton himself calls me to the carriage-door to ask me whether you calls your house 'Oakham Lodge' or 'Oakham Villa,' as he wants to write to yer to go and see him!"

The mere idea that a live Duke was pining for an audience with him caused Austin Moxon to stop growing for several minutes. He had no reason whatever to suspect that the Duke was even aware of his presence on earth, and he thought it equally unlikely that his Grace had, after a quarter of a century, discovered who it was that, for sheer sports sake had kept chi-iking "Lou-der!" during the ducal effort at the local political meeting in '79. Musing on these things and the gratifying fact that the stationmaster was too hopelessly a fool to be guilty of a joke on any subject, Austin Moxon sought counsel in the excellent old brown brandy at the "Lamb"; though with grateful memories of his pippin-faced visitor and his agitated entreaties, he went not to bed until he had seen the yellow "toothache" car housed safely in his stables and had bestowed upon it the fitting cognomen "ODONTALGIA."

"I ask your Grace to pardon my unpunctu-

ality," stammered the overwhelmed doctor, on being shown, two days later, into the cream and gold library at Croxton Castle at exactly three minutes after the hour named in the Duke's summons, "but a slight accident detained me on the way. I earnestly hope that my lateness has caused no inconvenience?"

"It has so seriously disturbed my arrangements, not to mention my peace of mind," replied the Duke, pleasantly, "that I had not yet noticed it. But I hope that it *was* but a slight accident, doctor?"

"So colourless and conventional an affair, your Grace," Doctor Moxon hastened to say, "that—er—that it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to imagine its parallel, I assure you."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Duke, impressed by this comprehensive disavowal, "then pray what may it have been?"

"My horse put his foot into a rabbit-hole, fell, broke his neck, and died upon the spot, sir," blurted the doctor.

No sooner did he hear his own words than Dr Moxon realised the absurdity, the incongruity of his previous denial; but he was wholly unprepared for the remarkable effect which they produced upon the Duke. That illustrious person twisted his body so suddenly in his chair that his *pince-nez* fell to the floor, and, staring excitedly at the doctor with an utterly incomprehensible

expression of delight tempered by solicitude, he cried:

"Splendid! Couldn't have been better! What a singularly opportune and fortunate circumstance!"

This was a poser! What could the Duke mean? Did he design to chide nonsensical servility by an assumption of supreme irony, or had his mental balance really been upset by such a juxtaposition of dissimilars coming from a presumably responsible medical man?

"Forgive my exuberance, doctor," continued the Duke, more seriously, "and be good enough to draw your chair a little more this way. That's it. Now, you were sent for the other day by a—ahem, a valued tenant of mine, whose horse had given her a rather bad fall in the hunting-field and bruised her pretty severely——"

"I have no recollection of the case whatever!" interposed Moxon, innocently enough.

"Probably not, sir, probably not," the Duke added, with a broad smile and a distinctly plebeian wink, "but as a gallant gentleman you will, I feel sure, permit my diagnosis to supersede your own. You would, I am firmly convinced, cheerfully die in defence of the austere morality, the impeccable reputation, the obdurate purity of any one of the adorable creatures who periodically grace these parts during the hunting season, and

in whose fair hands St Anthony himself would have been as potter's clay. We will, therefore, please, say it was a severe, uncompromising bruising which lately affected Lady Winifred Brandon——”

“Number four!” gasped Moxon beneath his breath. •

“But that is not the point, which rather is that although, like the immortal Gilpin, you rode with speed—the best of which your grey dobbin, whose loss I formally deplore, was capable—there was necessarily far more delay than if you had driven over on a motor-car. This reflection, and a sense of gratitude to you for your care of my—er, my valued tenant—yes, yes, my valued tenant, impel me to ask you to accept as a little present, a very pretty four-cylinder Darracq, just come from Suresnes, which——”

But Dr Moxon had staggered to his feet, his brain reeling with the drawing of many psychological conclusions, and he moved in a dazed way and emitting choking noises towards the open French window. A few turns round the Italian garden served to revive him; but how could he go back? How could he ever face the Duke after making such an irrational exit? Thus absorbed, he crept through the quickset hedge, and took the route through the woods to his home, arriving with burrs in his hair and garter-snakes in the folds of his trousers. Next

day there arrived the bruise-blue Darracq, now known as "ECCHYMOSIS"; since when the over-stocked doctor has assiduously advertised the machines on the thirteenth page of the *Telegraph* as duplicate wedding presents with all the familiar allurements—Sacrifice, Unused, Approval before Payment, etc.—and much against the advice of his prudent housekeeper, who sanguinely predicts a transference to London and a garage in Long Acre, if only Lady Winifred hunts from Melton for another season.

I am so pleased to hear, dear, that your sister Aenid's baby is going on so nicely, though, never even having had the sinister finger of suspicion directed at me, let alone possessed a baby of any kind, I have not even a passing notion of what they should endure and what escape before appearing in public. Reports of cases presenting specially interesting symptoms usually are concealed by publication in the "Mother' Corner" of the *Kennel Gazette*, I believe; the mothers themselves being mysteriously counselled with regard to their dietetical errors in feeding their offspring, in such cryptic sentences as "Stop the B.F. diet and report in a month," or, "Give baby the shredded pin-feathers of a young onion before retiring, and lie her on her other side." Nor can I express an opinion as to whether your sister's nurse's panacea for the pain in your sister's baby's stomach was good or otherwise, since, on

reference to the huge old book of pasted-in recipes for every ill allied to maternity, which Féo once conscientiously kept up, I find that the point was raised, but not settled, in the celebrated Salisbury Baby Claimant case some years ago. As you may or may not have read, a witness named Jane Lawrence deposed that after the birth of the child she gave her sister some weak brandy and water. She also gave the baby some butter and sugar (laughter). It was the usual custom, she said, to do so.

Mr Justice Hawkins asked Mr Jelf whether that was so.

Mr Jelf appealed to his learned friend, Mr. Dickens, whether that was *not* so.

Mr Dickens had received no instructions upon the point; in fact, he protested that he knew nothing about it.

Thereupon Mr Justice Hawkins said that the case must clearly be adjourned till eleven o'clock on the following morning.

Immediately beneath this cutting there appears in pencil: "Gf. Eastern Handicap, Amandier, Missal, Royal Mask. Twelve ran"; not that any affinity could possibly exist between the two events.

Marshall has just brought to me an imperious command to join Lady Thursa Rosacre at Lowndes Square in twenty minutes' time to mote to Brighton, her husband, probably considering

his freedom cheap at the sacrifice, having lent her his car for the week on condition that she drives it herself. An atmosphere of steam is a daily necessity of life to the Rosacres; and I daresay you remember how, when the Zoological Society proposed to send its leading elephant on tour to help expenses, how Thursa drove straight off to the offices in Hanover Square, and offered to ride the dear pachyderm three times round Regent's Park on the Saturday afternoon before Ascot, attired as Lady Godiva—purely in the cause of charity, of course. She reckoned it would bring in, she said, enough money to keep the Zoo out of the hole for two hundred years at least, if, indeed, it didn't create such a stampede at the turnstiles that such points as Gloucester and Clarence Gates would be over a week burying their dead.

But motoring in December is too dishevelling, and the bud who has ridden fifty-two miles in the teeth of a dust-storm and held her life in her hands one-hundred-and-twenty-seven distinct times between Piccadilly and Pyecombe, makes about as effective an entrance into Brighton as the last stone-bruised idiot in the shopboys' annual walk. And while Reginald Rosacre is none too deft in handling his own car, one really needs, to ride beside Thursa, nerves equal to those of the racing gentleman who, on his way back from the Slough railway accident, shot

seventeen pigeons running in a £5 sweepstakes, but was partially paralysed and completely prostrated by shock when the railway company's doctor called on the following morning to ascertain the extent of his injuries. Why, was not it only in August last, dear, that she and he and the dandy chapfleur sustained their memorable breakdown on this very road? Did not they start out, on one of those gummy, thunder-laden evenings, when the ceaseless ambition for sleep is only thwarted by the pestiferous attentions of the insects which everywhere abound, and fiercely attack all unprotected flesh with their little spiked shoes, to run down to Brighton and empty their lives of everything but petrol until Doncaster? And what happened?

Along about the middle watches of that night, when only a white streak marked the road and the travellers were exchanging the luscious dews of Surrey for the first suggestions of the salt sea-fret of Sussex, that car, which was popularly supposed not to know what a hill was, even if you showed it one, gave three spits and a conquassative tremor and came to a sudden stop. All in vain did the dapper stoker key-up this and tighten that, and pour fresh bituminous drinks carefully over the thing's appalling thirst; to no effect did Lord Reginald Rosacre unload the astounding anthology of profanity which he had at great pains acquired from one of the most celebrated

of the three hundred million professors of the art in Asia; as a vehicle of progression that car was 99 in 100 behind a crippled goat.

Through a hole in a hedge that hemmed about a redskin-flourball pasture, the two men pushed and butted the inoperative box of cylinders; Thursa, with her skirts held knee-high to elude the agile and amatory potato-bug, looking on with an air of persecuted resignation. She was elegantly dressed, as all women whose beauty is due more to art than inheritance invariably are; and Balzac's crude old line which, sterilised and disinfected, says that men love not the woman, but the woman's clothes, arose with unpleasant suggestiveness in Reginald's mind whenever he thought of going in search of succour, and leaving the chauffeur to look after Thursa. Equally impracticable did it seem to send forward Balzac's compatriot of the cigarette-fingers and the steering-wheel, since he spoke no language but his own; so ultimately the fair, overdressed child-wife had to be left at the mercy of the bugs with many misgivings, but definite instructions to sound a loud horn should danger seem impending.

Four miles and a quarter further on, there reposed in a Sleepy Hollow ten cottages, a baker's, a harness shop, and a Georgian inn; but Reginald Rosacre died ten deaths in reaching it. The first streaks of dawn were coming from

between the quaint old sixteenth-century bungalows on Hogg's Hill and falling on his lordship's left cheek, all grimy and grey with dust, as he staggered up to the tavern's oaken door and rapped upon it with a long steel monkey-wrench. A horse and trap—no matter at what cost—would still get them into Brighton ere most folks were up.

"Oho, there! Within, within!" he cried, lambasting the brave ilexian door with his puny implement.

A window sash, immediately above his head, was raised noisily, and a red-faced, half-awakened man looked out and asked what the future torment was the matter.

"Say, have you any flys heah?" cried Lord Rosacre.

"Millions an' millions of 'em, damyer!" roared the irate innkeeper, really using a much coarser objurgation. "But we don't buy our fly-papers in the middle o' the gory night! Take that!"

And, catching up two huge flower-bowls, or something, in the liquid contents of which some such pungent stalks as those of mignonette or wallflower had been stagnating for a week or more, he drenched his unexpected visitors as freely and liberally as, in the wild old days on the Euphrates, the magnificent Lucius Verus did his guests when he emptied murrhine vases filled with nard upon their heads before being

carried up drunk to bed in a coverlet of camel-hair.

No, Marshall, say please that I have gone to Turkey to gather arum lilies.

Thine, dear,

* VIOLA.

EPISTLE VIII

BUCKTHORN MANSE, SURREY, *January 6th.*

MY DEAREST PATRICIA,—

When you ingenuously asked in your refreshingly-conventional Yuletide rigmarole whether I duly suspended my stocking on Christmas Eve and, if so, what I got out of it, you were actuated more, I believe, by a vapid desire to appear “seasonable” than by a spirit of idle inquiry as to whether I had sensibly cloven the continuity of a ghastly practice; but in either case it cheers me greatly to be able to inform you that, though my shins are still covered with woven brown silk to a point that is defiant of criticism, I really *did* find it convenient to hang up my enamelled garters for a tenner, and, thanks to subsequent investments at the Buckthorn Park New Year’s Hunt Meeting, that sum has been multiplied sevenfold. A hunt meeting *per se* would mean less than nothing to you, dear, but when one is staying, as I am, with the people

who are the breath in the nostrils of the whole thing, one becomes a part of the meeting itself and appreciates with a new perception the points which previously were unseen or unrecognised. Unlike such foxy fixtures as Ascot and Epsom and Goodwood, where the roguery of the owner is too often reflected in the reluctance of the racehorse, an atmosphere of probity and rectitude envelops the hunt meeting and inspires its votaries to pursue the same policy of frank, unbuckled integrity and veracious candour by which alone it sternly silences the ever-ready tongue of scandal. Not as in flat-racing, where all is whispered and inscrutable, there is no concealment here from first to last—from the titled stewards meeting in the lavatory regularly before each race to equitably arrange the rates of betting; the humane trainers giving their horses a refreshing bucket of water apiece before sending them to the starting-post; the returning jockey of the winner pulling up without dismounting at the paddock bar and taking three large, courage-giving drinks and a pork pie before going in to scale; and finally the principal bookmaker driving off the course in a dogcart behind the hot favourite who was so unfortunately left at the post in the opening event. To me the whole thing is completely bewitching, for though, in the absence of trains reserved exclusively for the use of "Club" members, one may have to travel

in the company of persons whose knowledge of attenuated English classics is limited and whose conversations, even when ostentatiously suppressed, are distinctly not anæmic, there is ample compensation to be had in the overheard narrative of the drinking of strong wines from reeking gourds, to say nothing of the conversational "pointers" which accompany it. How I should *love* to stay in the dining-room with the men to-night whence all (the petticoats) but I had fled, to, like a gramophone, repeat this memoir of my journey down:

"Did ye 'ear about Bill Willis an' Tom Reeder a-goin' to Plumpton, George?"

"Which Bill Willis d'ye mean, 'Arry; him as set the old woman on the fire at Doncaster?"

"No, no; not him. The Bill Willis what the doctor in the Sunday paper told to eat a raw onion at each meal—him as they used to call 'Ev'ry-Morn-I-Bring-Thee-Vi'lets'?"

"Oh, *him*! Why, what happened to 'em?"

"They set out about a week ago to carry on the noble work at Plumpton Steeplechases, an', as both felt as they could do with a bit of a change, they arranged to stop 'private' in Brighton, at a little case in Black Lion Street where Tom Reeder annually took his old woman every August. It's not by no means a fash'nable lodgin' for society ducks—in fact, as showin' that the lan'lady wasn't expectin' winter lodgers, Bill

and Tom found as she'd been snowballin' the lay-out, or in other words, stuffin' all the settin'-room furniture, with that chemical moth-stuff what looks like candles but hums like as if the gas was turned on. There was only one bedroom, too, but it had a brace o' kips in it as well as a big double wardrobe for to 'ang yer clothes in; in every respec' as good a place as a man need want, and all comin' at a figure that didn't compel ye to give the lan'lady the frozen face on the last day o' the meetin' unless things went *extra* kerteever. You follow me, George?"

"Abso-pleadin'-lutely, 'Arry. Well?"

"Well—but you know what Brighton is, George; the wettest part o' the glorious place lies north o' the beach, not south. You stroll along the front fully intendin' to give yer old liver a good washin' in Schilling's beautiful natural sel'zer water, an', before you're half way to the Metropole, you've done eight or ten splits, a pint o' stout along o' the oysters what you've 'ad at the little shop behind the Star, an' Garter, so many gins-an'-bitters that yer stomach, originally humbugged into believin' it was a'goin' to have a square meal, refuses to take any further notice of 'em, a stray slosh o' bay rum where you got shaved in Ship Street, two or three drops o' that stuff as you took when the doctor told yer to do all as you could to be sick——"

"Ver-mooth."

“ Aye, ver-mooth; an’ by the time you oughter be half way to the racecourse you’re still a-lookin’ for a conveyance round about Castle Square, an’ a-gapin’ to such an extent that street boys comes up to you an’ offers to show yer the chemist’s shop in East Street where they sells the infallible yawn drops. But there’s one thing I *will* say for the Brighton atmosphere: you seem to pull yerself round again just as quick as you seemed to get oiled—consequently Bill Willis an’ Tom Reeder spent a thoroughly enj’able an’ int’lectual week of it.”

“ I’m sure! ”

“ Any’ow, on the Saturday mornin’ just about nine o’clock, Bill marches into the ‘Swan’ in Ship Street with his tongue a-feelin’ like a ash-heap an’ literally a-gaspin’ for his mornin’s mornin’. Now the ‘Swan’ in Ship Street is a sort of ‘ome-from-’ome for families an’ sportsmen visitin’ Brighton, an’ from goin’ there so frequent like, both Bill an’ Tom had come to know the manager. So, as Bill glides softly in, lookin’ as if he’d just seen Hell in a nightmare, the manager wishes him good-mornin’ an’ asks him if he hadn’t slep’ well last night. ‘ Fact is, mister,’ said Bill, ‘ I’ve only a hazy remembrance of ’ow I got to bed at all, an’ it certainly wasn’t till close on four this mornin’ in any case. That gentleman-friend o’ mine an’ me had two other gents to dinner at our lodgin’s—I dessay you remember we took

eight bottles o' Scotch away from here with us?—an' I must have had the devil's own luck at cards, for although I seemed to get whacked every time as I went the bundle, jiggered if I didn't wake up this mornin' with close on twelve quid in my kick—a state o' things that whistles aloud for a bottle o' the best. Give us yer wine list, an' set out one tumbler for yerself.' But the manager, though producin' the wine list, says he makes it a rule never to drink so early; besides he's jest had one; also it's the brewery traveller's day for comin' down, an' that'll mean another. So Bill Willis, with that glorious feelin' of affluence that comes from a well-lined kick—when one feels matey with all the world, an' seriously considers why he don't write to the brewery an' ask for special terms for a wholesale order—sings a bottle o' something extra sec at fourteen-an'-a-tanner, an' takes it from a half-pint tumbler. 'Drink 'earty, boy!' he says to himself aloud as he fills his second glass, an'—well, just as he said the words, in rushes Tom Reeder!"

"Just in time, eh?"

"No, a wee bit late. Tom's 'awfully hot-under-the-collar about something or other, for he no sooner sets eyes on Bill, than he bellers out, 'Gawdstroth, Bill, I've run half over Brighton to find yer!' 'Well, you should have took a fly,' says Vi'lets, bold with the booze;

‘but what’s the matter?’ ‘Matter enough!’ shouts Tom, ‘when you went to that ruddy wardrobe this mornin’ you put on *my* trahsers!’ ”

It may not have been a very convincing *argumentum ad judicium* (as they said at Weatherby’s when a certain racing countess wanted to register “Haste to the Wedding” as the name of a gelding) for one so well posted to have purchased before the eyes of all men a shilling card from a racecourse tipster, whose wardrobe would have precluded his obtaining employment at delivering coals, but I stood by the rails to listen to the engaging story of how he never failed to find the winner, but that it was his fearful thirst which seemed to keep him broke; how he should “be ’aving something *very* ’ot” for the last race, cabled straight to him by Slod Toan, who was at present schooling yearlings for President Roosevelt in the Phillypeanut Islands, on to which he wanted us to get our money into action quick, tear up our return briefs, and ride ’ome in an airship. Up to now, he continued, the Ring didn’t even know that such an ’orse existed; but owner, trainer, and jockey had tried it to give two stone to Pretty Polly, and were surprised to find it even so much better than *that*, that they had wired to Coutts’s to reserve room in their new premises for another scuttleful. All that he asked us to

were assembled, the rural auctioneer stood in his pulpit rubbing his hands together like the handkerchiefless person who eats prawns in a race-train, and grinning as if he had suddenly contracted gas on the brain. Nor was he disappointed. Opposed by a venal bunch of leather-leggined get-rich-quick's, Brónzewing's owner had to go to sixty-five guineas to retain her; and then, for a moment, we looked like languishing again, for even the excitement attaching to the attempted dispersal of a sensational stud of one soon dies down. "But don't go away, please," cried the auctioneer, to our intense relief, "I've one here that also ran. Williams, bring in Little Breeches."

And Williams did. Little Breeches, a nine-year-old gelding, standing about 17.2, came into the ring sideways like a one-eyed ghost reluctantly winging its way to heaven. Little Breeches had been given a pint and a half of the celebrated "Flying Hornet" preserving whisky before going to the post, and had tried three times to hang himself in the starting-gate; now that the first effects of the powerful stimulant were working off, there remained only a splitting headache, whose mission it was to beat it into him that he had been played, and, still too doped to show resentment, he walked round and round as though in a trance.

"Now, gentlemen," cried the auction person,

"I claim your attention to Little Breeches, by Gumsucker out of Sewing Girl, by Gozo, by Wild Oats. A nice, handy animal, gentlemen, and one that is sure to pick up a perfect roll of money this winter. He's in the Sluggard's Plate at Sandown Park next Tuesday at a nice weight, and only needs keying up to concert pitch; now what may I say for him?"

But answer there came none.

"Come, gentlemen, come," rated the auctioneer, in a tone of astonished reproach, "it only wants one of you to give me a start; may I put him in at five guineas? Walk him round again, Williams. A great, slashing colt like this—he was fairly on terms with the winner at the last hurdle—and five guineas only bid! Five—five in two places—six, thank you, sir. Six guineas only for Little Breeches! About a tenth of what he'd fetch to pull an omnibus! Seven, seven—against you, sir, at seven—eight. And eight I'm only offered; have you all done at—nine, thank you, nine; may I make it ten for you, sir? Ten—going at ten——"

But even as the auctioneer hung upon his own words there came running from the inner recesses of the refreshment room a burly, fatherly man of fifty, who had the hansom-cab industry stamped indelibly all over him. He seemed amazed to find that the sale had progressed so far, while he had been painting the future of

cabbing in rosy colours and bottled stout, and he pushed and elbowed his way through the throng as though eager to retrieve lost opportunities. Ducking beneath the railings and entering the sale-ring, he stooped and ran his critical right-hand fingers up and down the fore-legs of Little Breeches.

"What's this one, mister?" he asked the auctioneer.

"Little Breeches, sir, by Gumsucker out of Sewing Girl," replied the alert salesman, and added "and it is against you at ten. Now have you all done at ten——"

"AND SIX!" advanced the representative of the Shoful Trust, with the guileless air of one who hails from near to Nature's heart; and in two ticks he was being roughly hustled towards the bleak high road by a posse of the pantomimic pensioners done up in football pads, known as the racecourse police.

But there are more takedowns at this game of racing than are suspected by those who "do" their Derby dryfooted at their favourite music-hall—even if one gives them in the takedown by the exhilarated gentleman who is so pleased with himself at having worn dark blue and yellow braces, that he enters the stalls with them dangling at his heels for the racegoers in the pit to see and applaud. Though these stal-lites, after seeing St Amant spring from some-

where underneath the orchestra, execute a few wild buck and wing steps in Barnard's Ring, and then shoot bodily over the top of Mr Sherwood's cottage, may say of the sporting press what David said in his haste of all concerned, the dark thought and aching heart of desperation and despair are as often seen in racing, as the black eye and splitting headache of delirious joy. For instance, estimate if you can, the weight of anguish that is but faintly shadowed in the following letter, picked up by me from the platform at Victoria :

"PEAVINE VILLA, NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.

"MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—

Having cried over your sympathetic letter of yesterday until I have started my nose a-bleeding, I have now hypothecated my wedding ring and keeper, as you advised, and propose to stack my drapery and return to dear old Saffron Walden to-morrow by the 10.25 from Liverpool Street. Heav'n knows I have loved James Henry (who has again recently lost his voice in formally applying for a rise in his salary) as ardently as any woman could; but the accursed Yellow Card has come between us. How little did I dream when, nine months ago, James Henry offered me his heart, his hand, and whatever was left in the weekly envelope after sweetening Topping and Spindler; and I promised that even if he could not make me completely happy no other should ever try to do so; that he entertained no thought of forsaking the double-your-stake-but-stick-to-your-martingale system!

"For many months past James Henry, whose views on

the true methods of banishing poverty lend themselves felicitously to the purposes of the vigilant humorist, has been strenuously endeavouring to choke a firm at Flushing (postage 2½d.), and take it away from them. Meantime the rent has fallen two quarters in arrear, and our butcher has had the immortal rind to stop supplies entirely. The wretched grocer has followed suit, and—from the quires of circulars telling how an eighty-shilling income should carry a £200 bill-of-sale, which are dropped into our letter-box—has mentioned the matter more than once across his counter. The climax came on Tuesday evening, when, during Henry's absence, the landlord called. He had a bunch of bananas, a bottle of whisky, and six mince pies in a paper bag; and, saying he would rather meet me than a mowing machine any day, he chased me thirty-three times round the sitting-room sofa, and nearly forgot that he was a gentleman. I judged it better, however, to tell James Henry that Mr. Groundrent's demeanour was extremely frigid and bitterly threatening; for no wreck of matrimony can destroy its high ideals or take from her, who was judicious while it lasted, the gain to her own soul of unselfishly endeavouring to preserve peace at any sacrifice; whereupon James Henry wrote as follows:

“Look here, Groundrent, dear old soul; it galls me like sin to have to hand you the ice-bowl once again, but all my stocks are falling—Bath Tramways, Allsopp's Ordinary, Cotton Spinners' Deferred, and Schwebbe's Pref.—and I can't even book a date till one of them goes up. Knowing, however, that you occasionally make out a little bit of paper when you hear of any goods of an extra-superior quality, I want you to keep your mouth shut and absorb the following right straight into your system: You must have a pony each way to-morrow, Broiled Bird in the Hardware Plate, and when it has rollicked home, just pay yourself the two quarters' rent due, and act honourably by dropping a little cheque for half of the diff. remain-

ing into any pillar-box, addressed to—Yours, and so forth.'

"The occasional charwoman's little boy took the letter round, and was unreflectingly detained in the hall—I say unreflectingly for the reason that the youth was sucking a heavy line in paregoric lozenges at the time—while Mr Groundrent penned the following reply:—

"'Sir, 'you omit, intentionally, or otherwise, the Turf alias of the bug-eyed slanderer who averted that I occasionally pricked the garter; but I respect your confidence, and even beg to slip you a bigger cert than changing a shilling for a blind man. I want you to take the cotton batting out of your ears and let the good thing soak right in—Bum Bailiff for the Man-in-Possession Stakes, first thing in the morning. Act honourably, as he has imperative orders to nail anything to the floor if he catches you trying to shift it.—Yours and all, N. G.'

"Broiled Bird did not, I regret to say, connect; but Mr Groundrent's nominee arrived before we were up. He is at this moment gridironing a kipper at the kitchen fire and reading aloud to our small servant the more mirth-provoking paragraphs from the 'They say' column of *Stubbs's Mercantile Gazette*. Please have the spare bed well aired. I can walk up from the station, and leave my trunk in the cloakroom till later, since you say that old Snowdrop is nearly due to foal. Since Louisa took it to Southend it only fastens with a hairpin, but lord knows there's nothing in it to shock a married railway man. So no more, with love and kisses,

HENRIETTA."

And here must I break off, for the first bell has gone, and to-night dinner is to be followed by that fine old country-house frolic which

has been the beginning of so many flourishing society divorces—snapdragon with the lights out.

Thine,

VIOLA.

EPISTLE IX

EATON SQUARE, *Tuesday, February 15th.*

MY DEAR PATRICIA,—

How extremely dead are the pretty customs of St Valentine's Day! Time was when the bright, lively girl who for two or three seasons had been, as it were, a rag on every bush, used to look forward to the 14th of February to "get the office" to become the whole garment to some deserving young bachelor who had been reared with care. For such, St Valentine was a sort of last chance for late chickens, as the incubator persons say; but youths do not seem to take seriously to matrimony now, and if by chance one proposes to a girl in a conservatory or on the stairs, he calls round in the morning to apologise. And valentines—the earliest of which, dear, a red brick engraved with "Only one girl in the world for me," in cuneiform characters, which was handed by King David, the first royal correspondent, through the transom in Uriah's roof,

you still may see in the British Museum—are quite things of the past. Lovesick swains do not give, but expect to receive, valentines in these days; and only yesterday Lady Mabel Smoothleigh was telling me how her latest “boy” had importuned her to “send me something you have kissed.” But Mabel acted rather meanly, I think, in sending him her great athletic husband, a person of biceps rather than a beau, and one who while paying Mabel little attention himself is most handy at rushing up and sticking his knee in the pit of a weakling’s stomach, if he catches a weakling even looking at Mabel on the rare occasions when he takes her out. I have quite frequently noticed that these burly, impetuous bridegrooms who, before marriage, exact the most definite promises that ducksie will never, never leave their sides—not even to go to the bathroom by herself—are the first to tire of propinquity and to yearn to get back to the mud of the football field on Saturday to see the Kensal Green Hotspurs lay out the Brompton Cemetery Uniteds. The unfortunate “best boy” is dreadfully damaged, I fear, and principally through his not putting himself, as the old-fashioned Methodists used to say, “in a suitable attitude to receive the blessing,” but really these light-weight Josephs should make fuller inquiries.

Yesterday, let me tell you, I came perilously near falling into a new and insensate hobby: to-

day I am happily again as free and unfettered as the yellow heathen who, getting no answer to his latest prayer, pitches his Joss out into the back yard and dances a wild fandango on its breast. Yesterday I hung for awhile over the yawning chasm in which are immured "the Fancy": to-day I resume my former belief that the toy dog, with its asthma and its silk coat, and its velvet pad and its chronic snuffles, amounts to a public calamity. Write down in wine upon a rose-leaf scroll, as old Omar says, that I have had a very close shave of Caniolatry, but have got out.

I had strolled round to Grosvenor Place to carry a message from Féo to the widowed Lady Steyning, whose only daughter is so vitiated by having always been given her own way that she positively breeds Blenheim spaniels in the cream-and-gold drawing room which her anguished mother had specially modelled on that of the Viscountess Hayashi, in "the Gardens," lower down. But Io Venusta Falconrouge Mayleigh—a rather ancient and honourable name to be giving a pug-nosed tyke a carbolic bath with—simply exists for her dogs; she reads and writes and talks and dreams of nothing else—indeed she told me in confidence she veritably believed that the fascinating animal who tempted Eve was a fabled but unattainable ideal "cross" between the Schipperke and the Redwillow Airedale. Such a contention would surely have entangled even

Solomon himself—though, to be sure, the scriptural embodiment of wisdom who admitted that “the way of a man with a maid” had him beaten out of his boots would not take much losing nowadays. I felt dreadfully sorry for poor Lady Steyning, however, when the last little animal to receive its ablutions precipitated the complete outfit—basin, unguents, brushes, everything—partly over her lovely new oyster-blue moiré and liberally upon the equally beautiful green Wilton pile carpet, for her nerves are not strong and she suffers from a rheumatic affection of the eyes which constant weeping only aggravates.

But maternal tears have no effect upon Io; she has long accustomed herself to criticise her hysterical mother with considerable precision and an utter absence of sympathy; so, with a brusque but not unkindly “There, there, chop out the twaddle and turn off the tears and Vi and I may come back from the Dog Show in time to take lunch with you,” she dragged me downstairs, bundled me into a hansom, and almost before I had realised it we were bowling along the newly-made roads inside Buckingham Gate and traversing a perfect forest of labourers, all swinging their picks and shovels and other armorial bearings of the fine old Brassey family.

“I confess that her eyes give her some trouble,” remarked Io, as she drew her suède gloves on in the cab, “but she’s a jolly sight too

fond of calling her soul her own. The amount of 'footle,' as Mr Crosland calls it, that my brother Bill and I put up with from her exceeds human belief. I invariably talk back at her, but Bill, male-like, is more compassionate: he usually says nothing, taps the butler for a tenner—that's the best of paying servants regularly: you can always touch them for a bit if you run short—and then comes back in three days to see how the land lies. He'd have gone to Australia years ago, but for transportation being abolished and an idiotic system called 'passage-money' substituted. Aha! here's Piccadilly Circus; what do you say to a sherry and curacoa at the Cri.; north of this point all alcohol is outside the pale of Christian toleration?"

She has quite lost the girlishness that took Girton by storm, dear, and the charmingly confident way in which she entered the wine bar, and, sitting down at a small table and summoning a waiter, cried "Small elevens for two shareholders, and get a gait on you; we're keeping a 'fresh' horse waiting," would have compelled your admiration. Nor was she one whit less at home at the Dog Show itself. In her long tweed coat, cut loose enough in the back to give play to her gathered short skirt, and the high, tan, laced boots which only the neat-footed can wear with absolute confidence, she strutted up and down the sawdust aisles, disinterestedly accepting a saddle-

soap or hound-glove catalogue here and criticising a "nicked" or "trimmed" ear there, or declaring to some sister enthusiast that fish-biscuit manufacturers were every bit as mendacious as restaurateurs—stick to them for a month or two, and you are well done; after that you must hunt up somebody new who has got a name to make. I felt such an unqualified novice in dog matters that I could have screamed out of sheer exasperation; although I feel sure that I seemed quite deeply "in it" to Io by the hearty way she laughed when I told her how "we"—(it was an old, old story of Mr Contango's which I fortunately remembered)—won the Waterloo Cup with a dog who was trained exclusively on '48 brandy, and to whose tail a firework was adroitly attached at the psychological instant of the starting-gate going up.

We returned to Grosvenor Place to find Lady Steyning still tearful and distinctly not making the most of the placid middle age which should be her welcome portion. "I do wish you had been here an hour ago, Io, instead of dallying with your everlasting dogs," she bleated, "Sir David Fenner, from Harley Street, has been and he associates my *iritis* with the gouty diathesis—*arthritic iritis*, I think he called it. And I grieve to tell you—" (here the inevitable weeping started)—"he made no secret of the probab-b-b-ility—" (here she broke down piteously)

—" of my becoming stone b-b-blind before very long ! "

For a moment Io was manifestly embarrassed. She did not weep, but strolling mechanically to the piano, upon the music rack of which stood an autographed first copy of *Get Your Hair Cut*, she struck a few treble chords to regain her composure. Then, turning, she went and laid her right hand kindly on her mother's shoulder.

" Never mind, old sportie," she said, " you have always hated my ' everlasting ' dogs; *now*, perhaps, you will discover the utility of them. With ' Spotty,' or ' Dearie,' or ' Flossie ' on the end of a bit of string, and a stick to tap the pavements with, you can still toddle round Belgravia for many years to come ! "

Suiting the action to the suggestion, Io closed her eyes and, shuffling across the room, cried in an assumed and whining voice, " Buy a box o' lights, sir, pity the poor blind, the poor blind ! " For some reason or other, Lady Steyning burst into tears and rushed from the room: probably, as Io hazarded, " That blessed brother of mine has been bothering her again: he's *constantly* upsetting her."

I think that if I were Io I should take a firmer hand with a brother than she does. For a younger child he enjoys too many privileges—and naturally abuses them. Lady Steyning (whom he greatly shocked one night at the Opera by

shouting out to Edouard de Reszke, during his greatest scene in *Faust*, "Dy'e mind singing a bit slower, old man; my French is a bit rusty and I'm blowed if I can follow you!" thinks, for instance, that by encouraging him to go to all the best theatres and recitals, his better nature may eventually be appealed to and his baser 'propensities subdued. To this end she has given him *carte blanche* to ring up on the telephone her box-office agents in Bond Street, and to have put down to her account whatever seats he needs. He may be slowly assimilating music—and Io says she will back him to make more noise at a music-hall bar than Handel and Mozart and Rossini rolled together—but it is scarcely in accordance with old-fashioned views of propriety that a firm of high-standing in the musical world should have to render such a bill as the following to—

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE COUNTESS OF STEYNING.

In account with — and —

157A Old Bond Street, W.

<i>To</i>				
Feb. 10th.	1	Stage Box. Red Barn Varieties, Kil-		
		burn (Grand "Corder" Night)	£2	2 0
" 11th.	10	Resvd. Fauteuils. Peckham		
		Parthenon (Testimonial to "Pills,"		
		head waiter)	3	15 0
" 12th.	4	Dress Circles. Tabnab's Tottenham		
		Empire (First night of "Toffy's		
		Trotter, or Tannhauser in Ten		
		Minutes")	0	8 0

Feb. 13th.	2	Sofa Stalls. Poplar Pavilion (Wrestling Matinée, Acton Jim <i>versus</i> Gunnersbury Joe)	.	.	.	£0	15	0
"	14th.	Grande Loge. Bow Tivoli (Compy. Benft., Widow and Childn. of Fireman Gaspire)	.	.	.	3	3	0
"	15th.	2 Standing Rooms. Club Row Parthenon, Brick Lane, E. ("Pearly" King's Select Dog Fight)	.	.	.	4	0	0
						<hr/>		
						£14	3	0

And it is made all the more mortifying by the unctuous leer of the shopman in Bond Street, who, when poor Lady Steyning (not having perused the account) calls in to change a book or get a new piece of music, remarks :

"Might we ask yer leddyship to favour us with yer leddyship's orders for theatre tickets a little earlier, if possible? We very nearly missed the four dress circ's for 'Toffy's Trotter' last Wen's'dy through Tabnab's Empire not bein' on the telephone."

Pray what *do* you think that preposterous girl, Euphemia Hulcot, has just done? Being still under the impression that the "rich military blood of Uncle Joseph" flows in her veins, she has procured an appointment as a field-nurse in this Russo-Japanese unpleasantness, positively! In truth, Uncle Joseph's military record was so conspicuously unbloody that, like Dod Grile's hero, his friends sought for him the Humane Society's leather medal for saving life; nor did

he lose his leg at Inkerman, but in the Marylebone Road while spending the evening at the house of a man who was not at home himself, though his wife was. Uncle's involuntary host came home quite unexpectedly, however, and, thinking the place seemed too crowded, picked up the blunderbuss with which his ancestor fought (on both sides, by the way) at Naseby, and put about twelve ounces of buckshot, some old garden nails, and various other marine stores into Uncle Joseph's left leg just as Uncle Joseph was doing Follow-the-man-from-Cook's out of the window—"a Joseph never was a stayer!" as Mrs Potiphar remarked when she cast the coat-tail into the rag-bag. Six of the smartest surgeons in all England received Euphemia's kinsman at St Mary's Hospital, and, an hour later, when he recovered consciousness, they told him not to worry over his lost limb, but to consider it as a contribution to his mashing record.

To her fugitive knowledge of surgery, gathered from the four corners of *Hahnemann Undone, or How I Spiked Homeopathy's Battery*, she has added a course of campaign training, chiefly consisting of sleeping on a seaweed palliasse out in the bicycle shed, and now she is literally bursting to ring the bell on the Red Cross League. Nothing but the Rembrandtesque hue of her tresses secured her the official permit to join the fighting line. Said the extremely exalted Jap

person who gave it, "Every time I look at that ginger nut of yours, puss, I think of a little bit of stuff that I left behind in Nagasaki, and for her sweet sake alone I will slip you the trysting place on the 10th Osaka Mounted Assassins. Hand this to their Colonel"—here he presented her with a Chinatown washing bill—"and he will give you the put-and-call of the field coffee-stall, such as it is. Fare you well!"

Please the pigs and she's not pinched, Euphemia will leave Western barbarians and the Albert Docks on Wednesday next, wearing a loose shirtette of wax-red pongee girded to the ear-lobe with whalebone, and confined at the waist by a gold and matrix buckle. A plain gold necklet with topaz collets and a lucky pig charm, Harris tweed knickerbockers held in place by orange silk galluses, and pegamoid putties with hand-painted chrysanthemums, will complete the toilette. She will carry a somewhat darker blouse for evening wear, and cricket shoes, in the full expectation of having to stand in some slippery places before she gets back; also a silver whist-register and marking pencil, a "Little Wonder" printing-press for marking her linen, combination purse and card-case, glove-fastener, and a small wrist-bag containing loose change for 'bus fares, etc. Thus equipped she will travel with every confidence, and is not a bit afraid of falling in with Cossacks since she is quite an

adept at climbing a telegraph pole. As her aged Uncle Joseph says, she will be more in touch with life than *he* was at eighteen, when he swarmed up the lightning rod at the Girls' High School and then found the window fastened.

On Tuesday evening, Féo having promptly gone out to play Bridge, on being told by our housekeeper that the cellar needed re-coaling—and as it is only when she revokes that she wins, her winning is never in doubt—I put into practice the theory of that one of the saints who said that, if people only knew it, there were bushels of fun to be got out of being good, by “observing” Lent at the delightful Shrove Tuesday Ball at Covent Garden; and the only living being that knows how I returned at daybreak on Ash Wednesday is the obliging market porter who drove my car home, my chauffeur having been laid out during a misunderstanding with the coachman of the brougham immediately in his rear concerning the smell of his escaping petrol. Our chauffeur, I have heard Mr Contango say, entertains the idea that he can “go a bit with his fly-dusters,” in which case the man from the brougham must have been a veritable specialist, for our white-mackintoshed servitor went out like an egg-shell caught in a whirlwind. Even when the police recovered all that was left of him, there was no place to lay it out, so many dancing couples from the country having turned up quite

unexpectedly, that the limited accommodation of the Bijou Temperance Hotel was dreadfully over-taxed—indeed, the last Earl and Countess to arrive, yawning like craters, had, I am told, to put up with the boot cupboard on the lower landing.

This particular Ball was promoted, I imagine, in a purely devotional spirit, Messrs Rendle and Forsyth believing, with some accuracy, that men fast more willingly and spontaneously after an all-night tag; though it differs, I am also informed, from the dramatic annuals of other days in that the gentlemen who come chiefly to fight are never allowed to get in the way of the dancers. Save that, in the grand-circle, Lord Staffa of Iona (who is said to be so deeply interested in the dramatic career of Miss Elfie Delorme, of Daly's, and who was giving supper to a small party) dealt out a black eye to the Viscount Tynwald, one of his guests, for facetiously passing the Chateau Lafitte to a lady who had only asked for the vinegar; and that, in the corridor, two gentlemen from the Stock Exchange had a lightning mix-up on one remarking on being introduced to the other's lady, that formalities were a bit superfluous seeing that he had been fairly rancid on the bird himself some seven years ago; one might have been in almost any Belgravian drawing-room.

Oh yes! there was *one* other gentleman who

drew a Jonah ticket. For the moment I forget his name, but it was in all the papers some few months ago, when he staggered humanity by marrying his mother's maid instead of strangling her; and on Tuesday night he suddenly recognised her, though dominoed and masked, by the exceptional colour of her silk hose when she fell down during the Lancers. Of course, she was under the escort of her husband's oldest and dearest college chum (just as, in lower circles and the popular ballad, it is always that fun-loving economist "the lodger"); and, in order to plaster the walls of their private box on the second tier with the brains of the guilty pair, the wretched youth borrowed a hatchet from a fireman and ascended the stairs. He hammered on the box door; but, even as it flew open, his courage failed him, and murmuring, "No, no, I still love her too much to kill her," would have retired, axe and all, but for the numerous cohort of disappointed dancers that had followed for the express purpose of seeing that he did not do so. No sooner therefore did the guilty woman, grasping the situation, ask the crowd what it meant, by this intrusion, since the cavalier at her side was the kindest friend she knew, and a real good old thing while he lasted, than an athletic young stranger who had been handling iron bridges on the Upper Nile, stepped out and gave hubby one on the submaxillary gland and two on the bugle

before he could exclaim "Ooch!" and they took him away, I am told, on a hooded stretcher.

As to the dresses, dear, many of them were ravishing enough to have restored a madman to his senses! One of the most daring was, perhaps "Appendicitis," worn by a shapely blonde girl attired in a mere ham-frill of aseptic nun's-veiling, caught up at the side by a scalpel and a bistoury, crossed; completeness being secured by a large grape-seed carried between the fair wearer's languorous red lips. She was awarded by acclamation a huge kettle, and was told to take it home and treasure it as it would be her last whisper in *that* show. Many men turned round to look a second time at "Skip the Gutter," an ordinary champagne muslin walking-dress, the skirt of which was carried knee high to display cochineal silk socks and opera sandals. I wish I had been able to ascertain the name of the builder of this striking creation, but before I could get through the crowd, the fair wearer had disappeared—slipped out to see if the weather seemed likely to clear up, the policeman at the door said. A beautiful St John's Wood widow, who since her gallant young husband's death at the front, has gone every night to some function or other, being too nervous to sleep alone and having not a friend on earth except the man who happens to be with her, looked perfectly distracting in

whipped cream crêpe de chine, with pink Banksia roses and raspberry underpinning—an exceedingly rococo combination.

Much more I might have had to tell you had I not been most effectually held up on the staircase by the Earl of Thirstington, who had temporarily renounced everything but whisky-and-seltzer, and who, not penetrating my disguise, would certainly have hugged me where I stood had I not addressed him sternly by his family title and threatened him with all sorts of dire penalties if he did not permit me instantly to pass. Steadied somewhat by the sound of his own name, he implored me to unmask, but finding me inflexible, he assured me that since mating unhappily in order to please his people, about two years ago, he had continually prayed that Death might overtake him, in which earnest petition his inapposite spouse had frequently joined. He had now happened to hear by the merest accident that divorces were practically free in a place called Oklahoma, and if I would only accompany him to some lonely island where we could live Crusoe fashion until he got his decree and Southern Pacific's went above 63 again, he would be a white man and make me his Countess! Only think of it, Patricia! And it was only in October last that we all went down to his private chapel at Drouth

Park to the unveiling of the stained glass window which he erected to the memory of his wife who, in the previous August, died of grief at realising that he did not kiss her as ardently as formerly!

It was a very realistic bit of acting that I put in then, Kid! Giving him my left glove, and permitting him to kiss the tips of my fingers only, I told him he might inscribe his tablets with the name of "Elsie" and ring up 55793, Holborn, some time when he had a lighter load on. Fitly humbled by this admonition, he replied that in about ten hours he should ask me to join him at lunch at the Imperial, and if from any cause I could not or would not turn up, I should be performing a distinct service to his family by calling at Vine Street and requesting the police to have the fountain basins in Trafalgar Square dragged.

But, like Cinderella, I must do a timely duck; besides, February is all too short for long letters.

Thine,

VIOLA.

EPISTLE X

ROYAL YORK HOTEL, BRIGHTON, *March 12th.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

Your little note, forwarded to me from Eaton Square, came to hand yesterday, and just as soon as I have finished my breakfast I purpose forwarding to you in commemoration of the birthday of which you unselfishly remind me—(I would, by the way, cheerfully send you my breakfast also, but that a delicious kedgeree and a perfect champagne cup would be quite thrown away on a person whose changeless morning meal for years has consisted of a stiff brandy-and-soda and a splitting headache)—a beautiful little sapphire and diamond spittoon, which I fortunately saw in a shop window in King's Road yesterday. My memory is less definite concerning the total of your years, but considering you have had about four birthdays per annum since you became

acquainted with the fact that I possess real money in my own right, you cannot be far short of sixty.

Careless of your highly probable comment that you are being continually chevviéd through life by utterly uninteresting information, I may tell you,* Patricia, that a week ago I had serious thoughts of going in for athletics—fencing, punting, rowing, and especially wrestling. Bridge is all very well in its way, motoring is not so insufferably rotten, and golf, played to sacred music, satisfies the elderly, but it is the feat of honest labour that gives a girl the elasticity, the baudelarian swing of the hips, and the sweet self-confidence that she so much desires. And I had been a long-distance worshipper of athletes time enough to look upon them all as Olympian gods until my muscular chum Dot Warnford—why is it that the girl who is physically capable of throttling a Lothario with a “full-nelson,” or throwing a Tarquin over her head with a “flying-mare,” invariably bears a name like “•Dot ”?—came down last week-end. As a matter of fact I wired for her, purely and simply that she, who can infuse poetry into white canvas gymnastic shoes, or swing Indian clubs till the other girls in her environment look like a set of cripples, might feast her eyes as I have daily done upon “Socrates Aristides’ Phalanx of Undefeated Graeco-Roman Champions,” now

giving performances on the Pier. You have surely heard of Socrates Aristides at the London variety theatres: he is alternatively called The Aggravating Athenian? He is a truly splendid fellow, with just such a torso as they used to depict in the advertisements of Argosy braces—so widely dissimilar to that of the fashionable young man of to-day whose only exercise is betting on the tape. Aristides is, so to speak, the basic and fundamental principle of the whole show, the eight magnificent oysters adhering to the rock being the Intimidating Israelite, the Appalling Abyssinian, the Hideous Hessian, the Paralysing Parthian, the Dreadful Dalmatian, the Frightful Finn, the Horrible Hebrew, and the Terror of Tullamore. To the voice of Aristides I had listened enthralled, on many successive afternoons, as from the stage he offered to back any member of his troupe to inflict upon any comer more “falls” in one hour than the busiest woman in the Peerage would willingly acknowledge in a lifetime. Frequently some fatuous British amateur (for to our national shame no insular professors appear to be in the business at all) would essay a bout, whereat the noble Greek would call forward—say the Horrible Hebrew, who, having hitched up his worsted tubulars so that nothing might occur to mar the complete enjoyment of the programme, would proceed to put an armlock upon the stranger

that would cause him to cry peccavi in quite a loud tone of voice.

One vigorous, conclusive blow from Dot Warnford has completely shattered the rose jar! To *some* stomachs the bare and brutal truth is food, and tonic, and medicament, but my own digestive apparatus positively refuses to form chyle from crude or even unadroitly disguised veracities. The finest wine-cellar in all Mayfair may be raised upon concrete, bricked to stand for ever, and majestic in its very mustiness; but to my mind it passes swiftly away—crumbles into atomless nothingness—from the instant that an impoverished tenant begins to keep coals in it; in other words, Dot had not only seen the “Phalanx of Undefeated Graeco-Roman Champions” several times previously, but knew intimately each one of them, or, as she put it, had “met them on the mat.” And thus did she proceed to strip them:

The Intimidating Israelite, said she, won his title with a pack of cards while keeping a Leytonstone livery stable tidy at eighteen bits per week; and the Appalling Abyssinian came to this country in charge of a performing elephant, but so outdid the pachyderm in sea-sickness all the way that he was thrown overboard in Gravesend Reach by the coarse, but facetious, sea-captain, who dearly loved a joke and thought the place not inappropriate. The Hideous Hessian came

from Shepherd's Bush; it was a noted kind of grease-paint to be bought in Garrick Street, Covent Garden, that gave to him the pale sea-green complexion of a turtle's stomach. The Paralysing Parthian and the Dreadful Dalmatian never appeared together on the same platform;—indeed the parts were played by one and the same man on alternate nights in knee-pads of a different colour. Far from his being either “dreadful” or “paralysing,” his late chums, at the Westbourne Park Loco Sheds (G. W. Ry.), where he had been an esteemed foreman engine-wiper, spoke of him as being “as quiet a bloke as ever grafted in a boiler works.” The Frightful Finn was better known at Barnet Fair as “Dirty Mickey” who used to do a catch-as-catch-can with a bear in a boxing booth until, becoming unduly intoxicated one night, he so ragged the bear that it shouted, “Aisy, Mick, ye something fool!” and eventually drew a knife from its hind leg on him; an unfortunate affair which consummately ruined the show. The Horrible Hebrew, who originally sold patent medicines from a waggonette at market street-corners, had had the bad luck, one busy night, to get an entire batch of bile beans contaminated by coming in contact with his naphtha lamps, thereby ruining for ever his chances of succeeding in the medical profession; while the Terror of Tullamore nobody, either here or in Ireland, seemed to know any-

thing about. Dot had herself been so curious to learn something of the Terror's doubtless lurid past that she had addressed a personal note of interrogation to the Chief Constable of Leinster. This polite official, however, after making the most exhaustive and exhausting inquiries, replied that the only "terror" that had been known in Tullamore during the last half century, was a certain old lady who was in receipt of eight shillings a week from a firm of widows'-pension teamen in London, and who, immediately on receipt of postal order every Friday, expended the whole of the money in bottled porter, and then, after removing most of her clothing, proceeded to delight the populace by dancing in the streets, varying the performance occasionally by standing on her head. Why is it, I wonder, that elderly ladies invariably dance when under the influence of alcohol?

Thus passes my infatuation of yesterday, and with the departure of the athletic Dot, with her dumb-bells and developers and her efficacious substitute for heavy bedclothes, the very mention of which has often caused a sudden suffusion of blood to the temples of a modest listener of the adverse sex—"You don't catch me in bed," says she, "without a *Sportsman* between the blankets!"; only meaning, of course, that the journal of that name, being printed on particu-

larly good paper, gives warmth without weight—I shall subside to my former feminality, contemptuous neither of mice nor men.

It always amuses me to recall your bygone but well-remembered remark, that life in Brighton consisted principally in changing clothes and inquiring for letters, for it never fails to set me wondering whether, at the time of your last visit to the Sussex shore, you were too young to be ardent—an overgrown, scraggy schoolgirl to be kept out of mischief by close surveillance—or old enough to be jaded—a mere gawky and uninteresting cipher in that desert of humanity, the big hotel. In all probability, however, you would have sound economical motives for visiting Brighton during June or July, when the leaders of the aristocracy in the King's Road are the second bride of the great cereal breakfast-food, or the mamma and daughters of the sixpenny summer-drink crystals, "pure, wholesome, and possessing the pleasant aroma and refreshing acidity of the fresh-cut lemon?" It makes all the difference.

As I close these sentences the woman whose ripe beauty and rich millinery have been the talk of Brighton for a month past, is weeping herself hideous across two lawn pillows and behind drawn blinds in the costliest mansion in Hove, while the youth who was harpooned three weeks ago, and who resigned himself to

her absolute despotism until yesterday, is on his way to Ghargaroo in the Unfriendly Islands. The conquest of young Mr Bruton Berkeley by Mrs Lottsmore Barres, the junobusted relict of the late Colonel B. Gopher Barres, who founded the famous American trust for manufacturing baking-powder from the eggs of the sea-urchin and who met his death through getting his feet wet while playing the hose on his stocks, had startled even Brighton (for whose benefit matrimony is locally supposed to have been exclusively invented) by its suddenness. For Mr Berkeley had seemed (and probably was) quite a shy and blameless youth, satisfying neither the eye nor the judgment, and remarkable only for the uniform vapidty of his expressions. Meeting Mrs Barres, whose evening lace stockings and patent-leather Richelieu shoes are a byword down here, at a dance-supper at the Dome, however, the boy formed the instant opinion that she fairly out-classed all other representatives of her sex, and on telling her as much, was invited to call upon her on the following afternoon. It was whilst paying this pleasant call that he got what was coming to him.

It was indeed within five minutes of his arrival, while his charming hostess, dressed to within an inch of her life, had him alone in the

Louis-the-Something drawing-room, telling him of her unhappy married life with the late Colonel, and just how the Supreme Court gave her a decree on her substantiating her complaint that the respondent refused to divide his popcorn fairly that, without any warning, her nose began to bleed quite freely. Ever resourceful and ready for emergencies, Mr Berkeley rushed to the door, turned and took the key, and promptly rammed it down Mrs Lottsmore Barres's well-covered back, doubtless noticing as he did so that she would act wisely in future in renouncing all such nourishing food-stuffs as sweet potatoes, butter, cream, sugar, new bread, and chocolates. At that moment steps were heard in the corridor outside; some one tried the door, and finding it locked, began to knock. Upon realising the awfulness of the position, and the further fact that she could not return the key without disrobing in the presence of an acquaintance of only one day's standing, Mrs Lottsmore Barres promptly fainted, and—well, in true Lovelatian acknowledgment of the thoughtless way in which he had compromised the lady, Mr Bruton Berkeley empowered the sixteen male and female servants who at this juncture burst in the door to announce his immediate and formal engagement to their mistress. In place of the prosaic handshake with which his arrival had been greeted,

Mr Berkeley departed with a warm and affectionate kiss upon his lips and a large panel photograph by Sarony, measuring 17 × 36, without the massive silver frame, beneath his arm. It may have been not recently taken, but it showed the upper two-thirds of Mrs Lottsmore Barres in half-tone profile, laughing artlessly over her right shoulder at an imaginary husband who was being taken to prison for her dressmaker's bill, and was calling back to enjoin her not to forget during the coming sixty days that she was still a married woman. In return, Mr Berkeley sent Mrs Barres a hurried tinograph of himself taken on the beach, not as a permanent record but as a sort of carry-over until the photographers in East Street could finish for him a set of cabinets; which done, he set up the magnificent picture of his fiancée on a gilt and plush easel in his hotel bedroom.

Alas! why does not some unseen power obliterate us all, just as we have reached and sat for awhile on the topmost pinnacle of earthly happiness? What heartaches might be spared were we in the midst of all our glory to be eternally debarred from drifting back into the muddy pool of humdrum conventionality! That night Mr Berkeley lay gazing upon the limned presentment of his love by the light of the expiring fire, precisely as did Wordsworth—or

perhaps I should have said Shelley—when he wrote, his languid eyes still fixed upon her portrait :

“ Of herself but a mere reminder
Till the shadows began to creep,
Then, taking one ‘ tot ’ as a binder,
I suddenly fell asleep.”

Eight hours later, during the comparatively disagreeable moments of returning consciousness which preface the superlatively disgusting necessity for getting out of bed, Mr Berkeley noticed that his window was wide open, that the lace curtains were floating and flapping like pennants in the morning breeze. He next observed that towering about the quite ordinary disorder of a varnished pump on the washstand, a shower of silver coins on the hearthrug, and a dress-coat in the fender, there existed a more definite and significant disarrangement of his chambers ameublement. Diamond pins and ruby rings and pearl shirt-studs bestrewed the floor : money and jewellery were scattered on all sides. Here lay a bureau drawer, all ransacked and upturned ; there a jewel-case, wrenched and rummaged, but not robbed ; the lock of yonder wardrobe had been raped, the sartorial contents of the wardrobe searched and flung about, but neither damaged nor depleted ; nothing did the scene suggest so vividly as the tousled track

over which an irascible woman had hunted in vain for a fugitive but favourite hat-pin.

But stay—

From the golden easel the panel portrait of Hortensia Lottsmore Barres had alone been stolen! The survey of a single instant served to show that there now adhered to the gilt ledge upon which the cherished likeness had so lately stood nothing but a scrawled note, written apparently with much haste, and the charcoal end of a burned match. Jumping out of bed and clutching the precious document, Mr Bruton Berkeley read :

“ SLUMBERING UNKNOWN,—

“ This is a let-off for you, and no sanguinary error! Much, however, as I need fresh financial underpinning, I cannot ‘ ease ’ you with *her* eyes watching me. With one exception, you will find your props as safe, if not as undisturbed, as if they had been spiked down : I have half-inched nothing but the portrait of—MY MOTHER! I had been told she was in Heaven : I lament the lie, but hope, as the next best, that she’s still in Society—not that *I* go out much; in the daytime, anyway. If I now ask you not to marry her, it is less on account of caring whether you are lynched for bigamy, than that you don’t somehow connect with a dream I had of my next stepfather.

“ Yours for a true bill,

“ PYTHAG THE PORCH-CLIMBER.”

Inasmuch as the burglar had left untouched quite five hundred pounds worth of property, not including the two ham sandwiches which he had tied beneath his boot soles to deaden the sound of his footsteps, and which were fully identified by the barmaids from the railway station later in the day, the genuineness of his letter was beyond reasonable questioning; yet Mr Berkeley timidly but successfully shunned Mrs Lottsmore Barres until the evening. Then, with the rare daring that is born of drink, he burst into her presence and inquired with all the confidence possessed by one who feels that things are coming his way, what she thought of the old Greek philosophers in general, and of Plato and Pythagoras in particular? Suspecting nothing, Mrs Barres replied that she had always regarded Plato as a bit of a hold-over, but as for dear old J. H. Pythag—how fateful was the abbreviation!—"why, he should have been nothing less than a Vanderbilt, 'specially for his brainy distinctions 'tween the soul an' the body!"

That was enough! Like a true squire of dames, Mr Bruton Berkeley held his peace at the time, but pulled his freight out of Brighton with the coming of night. He is now upon the high seas, and his friends here are sanguine that he will fare well. There is little risk, after all, in consigning an easy-going, good-natured lad

of mettle, totally devoid of either solidity or ambition, to a horde of friendly cannibals; whereas an older person of high morals and credentials going out to such a place as Buenos Ayres to take up an official position, would certainly be preceded by his reputation for strict integrity and incorruptibility, and on that ground alone would be instantly murdered on arrival. As for Mrs Lottsmore Barres, her wound will quickly heal. Like the racing peer who could never set eyes on the late Mr Weatherby without feeling an irresistible desire to scratch something, the mere sight of an eligible bachelor steels her for conquest. She will array her form in new frocks and her soul in new sentiments and, with a yellow dog for a mascotte, re-enter the fray. I do not know that I myself may not risk paying her a visit of condolence this afternoon: man-hunting is not contagious, is it?

Almost the only drawback to being out of town at this season is that one rather fails to grasp some of the allusions to "What the Little Birds are Saying" in the only possible ladies' newspaper; so, dear, though well aware that you cannot take up a pen without losing a lie, *may* I ask you to furnish me with the diagrams to the following:—

OVERHEARD BY THE LITTLE BIRD

In Chesterfield Gardens—"That Lady Alberta would certainly do well to swear off for a season and give it a much-needed rest."

At the same—"That her coronet only kept on her head by the timely aid of her left ear at the christening of the new torpedo-destroyer last Thursday."

At the same—"And that when it came to naming the vessel *Polyhymnia*, she simply couldn't stick it."

On The Lees—"That the gallant and much-to-be-pitied Major acted foolishly in going for the Rajah as he did."

At the same—"That all Folkestone has known about it for weeks, but never expected anything half so rich as last Saturday's free, *al-fresco* entertainment."

At the same—"That the genial old soldier's sporting instincts came out strongly even in his wrath when he kicked the whitey-brown, half-clad co-respondent in embryo three times round the new golf links, of which he is such an enthusiastic hon. sec."

At the same—"That it never would have happened if the timepiece in the boudoir had not been forty minutes slow—despite

the fact that when Cupid gets both arms full he is apt to forget to keep an eye on the clock."

In Great Marlborough Street—"That His Lordship's friends would certainly have succeeded in finding the required bail: but that it was Her Ladyship who prevented them."

At Holloway—"That it was additionally unfeeling of Her Ladyship to restrain His Lordship's friends from providing him with suitable food, but that he contrived to support existence till the morning on some Nubian blacking and a sickly pot of egg-plants which had been abandoned by a former occupant."

On Deeside—"That it is quite true, as the Honourable Mrs Tuffold-Knutt informed the *Era* interviewer after her recent private theatricals, that she doesn't *really* know how old she is."

At the same—"That if we were anything approaching the same age we wouldn't want to know, either."

At the Hotel Sessil—"That Mr Pierpoint Morgan, who is carrying everything but his coat-tails before him, is about to subsidise the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway (which connects also with Joppa by sacred-bull team) so that the 10.45 A.M. daily from Tyre (the famous "Flying Levite") will now be electrified and re-upholstered; and ice-water, boxes of figs, and cheap editions of

‘The Strenuous Life’ and ‘Mr Dooley’ will be obtainable on all cars.”

In Jermyn Street—“That the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the Honourable Hughie’s socks, whilst their owner was being massaged on Tuesday, has not been cleared up; meanwhile the attendant declares on oath that Hugh brought none with him.”

At the same (in the Cooling Room)—“That Hugh prized them more particularly from the fact that he bought them years ago in a tavern bar in Old Broad Street of a now leading light of the Kaffir market.”

At the Bazaar in Aid of the Asylum for Disabled Thought Readers—“That Lady Ena considers the husband who goes to Lhasa and remains there a greater benefactor than the one who returns home unexpectedly.”

At the same—“That the introduction of the flurried individual as ‘the famous telepathic faith-healer from Athens’ was an exceedingly clever bit of invention, all in sixty seconds, although the ‘faith-healer’ more than once came perilously near wrecking everything by causing the Athenian to chatter alternately the pidgin of a Bowlamine Chinaman and brogue of a music-hall Irishman.”

At the same—“That blind faith, insatiable hope, and boundless charity are unquestionably the principal ingredients in Lord Samuel’s composition.”

Grieved indeed am I to hear that a bad oyster, carelessly swallowed while laughing at Lord Archbold's diverting story of the old donkey-woman at Ramsgate, who neglected Sterne's admonition to keep one's eye on one's ass has kept you to your room of late, but if your winning enough to take you to Lincoln depends on my telling you of a "fetid, mephitic outsider which will be certain to fiddle into the first three in the Handicap," you will stay away from bleak Carholme this spring; but from your remark that you are experiencing a "stern touch of stuckology," I judge that the last litter of blue Persians was a flam. Though this is perhaps as well, since prosperity swallows up one's energy and obscures one's virtues, I regret that I cannot at the moment indicate a prize strain of felines that will reproduce its species for the sale-bench once a fortnight, while their owner is mastering the primary principles at Bridge. Should I hear of one at the Dome, during "Israel in Egypt" to-night, however, I will put a blue tag on it and reserve it for you.

What odd things servants do say at times! Do you know, Patricia, as Marshall was dressing my hair this morning, she suddenly exclaimed, "Aren't you surprised to learn, my lady, as how the Earl o' Mintstalk was once a domestic servant?" And when I asked her what on earth she meant, she said "Anyway he admitted before

Sir Francis Joon yesterday, that for years before they was married her leddyship was his *mistress!* ”

But there goes the dinner gong and, as an admirable chef is easily slighted and I am just about as ravenous as a hyæna with tapeworm, *adois, little one, adois!*

Your affectionate friend,

VIOLA.

EPISTLE XI

EATON SQUARE, *Friday, April 8th.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

Should you chance to have by you such a thing as a disused buffalo motor-coat, a suit of cast-off oilskins, or any other old garment which is too conspicuous to donate to the ordinary social leper, would you kindly send it to the P. and O. Agents at Marseilles—in the Rue Noailles, I think—to await the return of poor Euphemia Hulcot, whose high motives have been so shamefully tampered with by the Japanese Censor at the front that she is returning to pickle the walnuts and label the jam at her home in Kent, but desires to re-enter London unobserved? Arriving with the Imperial Army at Wiju, literally tingling with the desire to nurse back to health the victims of the spiteful *jui-jitsu* (or whatever is the name of the national ambidextrous cussedness) and incidentally to paint comprehensive word pictures for the *Ladies' Sphere*, she found it not at

all nice to be allocated, under fixed arms, to a quiet hamlet consisting of a house and barn, once made of rice paper, containing a wild cat and a pack of cards, and situated on a sandy ridge between two millet fields. She certainly had told off to see that she didn't go away, two little brown men with half a pair of crimson overalls between them, who told Japanese stories which no lady could possibly have heard had they not been related with an accent that was simply delicious to listen to; also she was given a bamboo gun that would carry popcorn as far as where the sitting-room window had been knocked out (and most of the wall along with it) but with strict instructions in the event of an outbreak to return the weapon at once to the sentries.

All this was well enough in a way, but the disabilities far outweighed the advantages, and at any reference to war the little brown men became mentally opaque. Thus when Euphemia attempted to "draw" them by comparing the situation to the first campaign in Italy in 1796, they professed not to have heard of Napoleon as a fighter, though they remembered all the others, including Jack Dempsey and Gus Ruhlin; moreover the only accommodation offered a lady correspondent wishing to change her garments was the open country behind the ha-ha, or mimosa, bush.

At first Euphemia merely protested in a

formal way, but finding this of no avail, she ultimately insisted on being taken before General Kuroki, to whom (despite his many polite protests that he was already five minutes overdue on a previous engagement to hold a hand-to-hand argument with General Kuropatkin in a mudfield at Ping Yang) she explained that it might be just as well if he understood that, although she had temporarily assumed the duties of special correspondent to the *Ladies' Sphere*, she was the most strictly virtuous and religious unmarried lady that ever came out of a country where the easiest thing imaginable for a smart girl to do was to marry any man she wanted to; that though the average Japanese lady was so inviolably sacred that she was kept indoors till she degenerated into a sort of tit-bit of family furniture, you couldn't come that racket on the rosebuds of the West, where no man was obliged to feel the burden of daughters who took proper care of their early education. She didn't see anything in that to grin at. Her family had fought and bled for Great Britain since before boxing-gloves were invented—till, in fact, it had come to be regarded as the country's standing Gibraltar; and she didn't propose to travel twelve thousand miles to be shut up in a tissue-paper bandbox with nothing but an Asiatic wild cat to which she had not been properly introduced, to suit the likes of anybody. Representatives of allied nations—she should not

particularise—might get transitorily dippy over winning one or two skirmishes with hairy convicts done up in padded ulsters; but “who was’t betrayed the Capitol; who lost Marc Antony the world; who was the cause of a long ten years’ war and laid at last old Troy in ashes”? A snubbed lady correspondent at the front, she believed.

The General made no reply—a man’s real character is only visible in moments of intense emotion—but, signalling for a fountain pen to a soldier who had just got a hammer-lock on a Seoul ploughboy whom he had spotted passing with a pocketful of contraband gingerbread, he wrote out the following and gave it to Euphemia with a kiss and a large red apple which he had brought with him from Anju:

“ To our Soldiers in General, and the 10th Osaka Mounted Assassins in especialty. See to it:

“ That our well-beloved sister, Euphemia of the Greyhound Legs, the Unwon Bosom, the acquired staccâtq trot of Tokio; being neither geisha, fleur-de-lit, nor ex-swell rag from the Transwaal, stayeth out of doors as late as she listeth. She doth it for the love of us, and she’s copyright, she is. Nix general orders; to the C Division say she is our laidifriend and has our private countersign, ‘ Pass the beancake. Banzai! ’

“ May your wounds be as halfpence in the Dai Ichi Ginko,

“ KUROKI.”

Being an advanced disciple of freethought and consequently holding no superstitions as to the eating of apples, Euphemia at once publicly consumed one half of the red pippin, giving the remaining half, with the large, fat worm in it, to the sentry; but matey as the General had seemed, he really had neither soul nor conscience behind his little brown eyes. From the time Euphemia accepted that special permit, she was as nobly a fool-on-furlough as the darkest African belle that ever was satisfied with a piece of red cloth or a handful of glass beads. Honeyed as that written watchword looked, it was substantially the roughest turn-down that ever was put into cipher. Officers to whom Euphemia produced it shed torrents of tears out of formal politeness, but knew exactly how many pieces of luggage she was carrying, and precisely what sort of stockings she had on; and daily she realised that she was drawing nearer, nearer, nearer to the outposts. One evening a lieutenant-colonel of infantry, so repulsively plain that his poor face actually ached from the pain caused by its terrible shape, put a mark like a Whistlerian butterfly on the top corner of the passport, and thereafter, the soldiers who inspected it—and Euphemia—simply whistled through their teeth at her. At Feng-huan-cheng she was imprisoned for ten hours and slapped on parade before all ranks for applying the term “a nasty, insulting, old barn-choote” to

a brigadier-general who had passed upon her some remark which, though unintelligible, was doubtless coarse, since it caused the sentries to drop their weapons and roll on the floor with laughter: at Taku-shan the captain of the block-house read the warrant, smiled at Euphemia, counted his money, then shrugged his shoulders and motioned to her to pass away; it was the same all through the lines. To this or that person in high office she applied, day by day, in docile and submissive mood, but, like the small boy who was eaten by the domesticated lion in the circus at Barnsley, went away in a pet.

Everywhere and all the day, she says, the stranger's leg is vigorously pulled. Even the little Jap who, during his convalescence after being wounded at Souchou, embroidered for her with alleged cherry-blossoms a square of black satin, gave her his name as Ohara Whirroo; and she has since discovered that the silk-stitched blossom bears a strange and striking resemblance to the potato-plant. Ultimately catching the infectious habit of dissembling the most unpleasant convictions, she taught herself at last to round-off the most conventional common-places with some such phrase as "Thanks, thou colossal and incomparable object of envy to Ananias; thanks!"

But her pity for the wounded Russians who fell into her hands was very real—as well it might

bè. . They were brought to fight from the prisons on the convict island of Sakahalin, and had to bear the brunt of the battle in proportion to their past offences. Thus, the first line of defence was composed of murderers, money-lenders, manufacturers of inflammable flannelette underclothing, and pleaders of the Gaming Act. The second consisted chiefly of stewards of hunt-meetings, burglars, baby-farmers, and dermatologists from West Virginia convicted of grafting male skin on to female chins to supply the market with bearded ladies for freak museums; the last line of all being the defaulters of alimony and the unmuzzled dog summonses. The greatest grievance of all was perhaps that which was cherished by an exile from Warsaw, whose internal clockwork had been rudely disarranged by eighteen inches of triangular steel at the end of a Nagasaki musket at Chongju.

“ It’s all very well for these here Japs to blow about dispensin’ justice distilled to an essence,” he remarked to Euphemia, “ but to be bayoneted in the *gutz** for failin’ to abate a smoky chimney is a bit sultry, ain’t it? ”

A few days ago, Phyllis Waring was keenly desirous that I should accompany her to Paris to see if *Monsieur le Matou* is a suitable piece to put on at the forthcoming performance by the

* A purely Muscovite idiom for the pantry parts, the seeming crudity of which is to be deplored.

Copthebird Strollers in aid of the Asylum for the Indignant Blind, but as I am rather fed up with the French (to say nothing of the idiotic Strollers, whose sixteen skittish lady amateurs are already quarrelling as to which first takes " Dick " when *Whittington* is produced next Christmas) who sorely need some good and true friend to point out to them that, having invented matrimony, as they are fully persuaded they did do, it was unlike them not to patent it and thereby secure their just fees and royalties; and as, unlike myself, Phyllis evinces no desire to shun the ephemeral intimacies that travellers are so ready to establish, she would be sure to find some chivalrous male person aboard the boat to hold her head at the taffrail, I did not go. And now it seems that *Monsieur le Matou* is but a rehashing of the old, old *ménage à trois* idea, for knowing naught of which poor Uriah of Scripture history got steered against his Waterloo. Poor Uriah! Himself entertaining Hittitic objections to bathing—he simply hated sanitation and always swore that it would hasten his end—he still had gentlemanliness enough to relax his customary surveillance while his fair wife performed the ablutions which he admired but did not understand, and he sate down outside on the little cork mat, smiling to think how well-beloved he was quite apart from any question of money. He smiled again in a self-satisfied way as he heard the water splashing

within, for he remembered how he had said on first seeing the laving tank when he took over the new house, "Aha! Some silly fool will be drowned in this, but it won't be me!" and there and then did he renew his vow that the only way they should ever get him into the thing would be to chloroform him first. Poor Uriah! How little did he suspect that, even at that moment, there was creeping on his royal stomach across the tiles——

But I must not bore you to death with all this moralising, dear.

In *Monsieur le Matou* the *tertium quid* is an operatic tenor who, adoring Madame la Chatte for her dulcet tones alone, drops in to try her voice, while M. le Matou is at the chase, pursuing the bloodthirsty hare, the fierce hedge-sparrow. At the psychological moment—just as Madame closes her eyes to take the upper C—Monsieur bursts in, a plume in his hat, a tasselled bag hanging from his neck, a very arsenal bristling in his brown belt. Instantly the wretched pair, while imploring him to spare their lives, fall at his feet implying that, if the worst comes to the worst, they will, like the man who was on a hiding to nothing the first time Tom Sayers saw him, "take it lying down."

"No, no!" cries M. le Matou, pronouncing the tag as the stage hands take hold of the guy ropes in readiness for a quick curtain, "I do

not purpose to destroy you here, but you will find that my terms are worse than death itself (sensation). They are that you, sir, do this very night take her with you to Marseilles (increased sensation) by the 9.15 on the Paris-Lyons-et-Méditerranée!" (loud groans and hisses, several ladies in the audience who have in the course of their checkered careers been inveigled into this train, swooning away in their fauteuils).

After the manner of British adventurers into France, Phyllis rends the restaurants (and the native tongue) without mercy, but she will have to be told that there is really no such word in the French, or any other language, as "Kwezeen," and no necessity for it; though, truly, it was commendable moderation in her not to write "Kwezeen," as is commonly done by the otherwise gifted authoress of "How to Give a Monday Lunch for a Dozen without Spending a Tosser." The correct thing is "cuisine," and to spell things with a "K" which look softer with a "C" is to prove that one was born when the sign was wrong. It is news, however, that the wearing of captive insects is again *de rigueur*; and Phyllis was fortunate enough to secure a magnificent specimen of a dark green hunting-cased cockchafer, held by a gold chain. It must have looked awfully *chic*, she says, as she sat in the fauteuils of the Odéon, but it

unfortunately got into a fight with the armour-plated tiger-beetle of the lady sitting behind, and, losing its off forceps in the second round, was pounced upon by the watchful harlequin scarabæus, or "Cairo timberman," of the lady on Phyllis's left, with which it more than held its own until the audience yelled for M. Poë to enter the ring and separate them. Phyllis does not despair of nursing the great green beauty back to its former health, but it has incurred a fearful "mouse," she says, and will hereafter wear a "thick ear" to its dying day.

The first flower that blooms in the spring, dear, is the nettle, and though mere seasonage never yet caused Féo's perennial human poisonous plant a second's uneasiness, Mr Contango has just stung her "good and plenty," as they say at the Sessil, by getting run in on a consolidated charge of assault and battery, also defamation of the character of prosecutor's sister, obstructing the thoroughfare of Swallow Street, Regent Street, whilst drunk and incapable, and damaging a constable's uniform. It is a narrow and craven story, though the verification of some of the charges at the first hearing, which terminated in a remand, brought a sweet-and-twenty smile to the stern-and-sixty dial of the salaried Solon who exists only to side-pocket his patrons.

To a lady who resided in Burleigh Mansions

and who, while appearing in court in a tight-fitting frock of blue silk with a white Panama pulled well down over her eyebrows, claimed the modern privilege of remaining heavily veiled and testifying as "Mrs X.," Mr Contango had given a cheque for five pounds, the only consideration being (he said) that it was to form the nucleus of a fund which "Mrs X.," and several other society ladies were promoting to purchase the penny steamboat *Citizen*, now moored off Cleopatra's Needle, and fit her up as a hospital ship for service in the Yellow Sea. Though "Mrs. X.'s" family, counsel said, was a notable old Saxon one and might have altered English History had not her early ancestor, who treated Edward the Confessor for scrofula, met his death whilst cat shooting in the Royal Forest of Pimlico, owing to the bullet leaving his weapon at the butt, she undoubtedly had a brother who was at the present time a cabman. She admitted having mentioned this person to the prisoner with reference to the hospital ship, her relative, who had frequently observed that "cabbings was no conjure," having said give him a barrel of bitter and the run of a bedstead shop, and he would transform the *Citizen* into the talk of the Thames. She had also seven sisters, six of whom were willing to leave the stage to become hospital-ship nurses, but the seventh, who had freckles and a cock eye, had permanently settled

in the postal service. But the payment of five pounds had nothing whatever to do with marine matters and she didn't think any the more of the prisoner, who *called* himself a gentleman, for trying to shift the cut on her in that way.

Meantime the cheque, having been enthusiastically dishonoured, was returned to "Mrs X.," who subsequently sold it for two shillings as a natural curiosity to another of her brothers, who, as Charlie Upham, kept a starting-price office for military turfites of approved references in Swallow Street. In this capacity Upham was quite well acquainted, and occasionally did business, with Mr Contango, up to the time when the latter had five half-dollars on Pitch Battle at Nottingham, at 100 to 12, and was offered, in settlement, his own discredited stumer, a postal for three bob, and twenty-eight half-penny stamps. It was then that he assaulted and battered Upham in his office, and was flung out of the window, amid the thunder of the captains and the shouting; and the humane C Division of police, finding him lying on his back, too frail to withstand the contamination and wickedness of the outer world, reversed him by his wrists and ankles, and carried him inside.

Féo no sooner heard of it than, with the promptitude of a Napier, she rang up that old

and trusted repository of shameful secrets, our family solicitor—by which please do not misunderstand me to mean our City, or put-and-call solicitor, who is so bewitching a figure at dramatic first nights; our smart solicitor, who hangs up his red golf jacket and takes down the *Cause List* with a large yawn; or our mere buffer solicitor, who is rude to rural benches over our furious-driving summonses; but our old family solicitor. She rang up Mr Coke and bleated that her latest needs were far too sacred to be related over the phone with Gerrard listening, but would he take the very first vehicle on the rank, no matter if it were only a dust-cart, and come to her instantly. And he did.

It was raining rather smartly as they left the house, some twenty minutes later, and the old lawyer had brought no brolly; but Féo could not possibly order the carriage for such an odious destination as Brixton Stir; she could not even suffer a hansom to be whistled to the door.

“Give Mr Coke an umbrella,” she cried, as though she herself were contemptuous of the weather, and two footmen in powder instantly drew from the stand an elegant parapluie with an ebon stick, surmounted by a crutch of tortoise shell bound and heeled with eighteen-carat gold.

All through the long ride to the prison at Brixton, Féo lay back in the shadows of the four-wheeler's cushions in gloomy silence, her bosom rent by conflicting emotions. For years past she had lain her very life—she who had the figure of Diana and the beauty of an Aphrodite—at the clay feet of a man who now regarded her only as nine stone of stale cake. Against his myriad infidelities she had promulgated no decree, well knowing that it would only be disobeyed in such hearty fashion as to reduce to *débris* the prestige of wifely authority; but her soul had sunk within her when she had heard how her Sandown badge had been worn by the kitchenmaid at the Skittle Club; she had groaned aloud when asked to believe that such a wire as “For heaven's sake send her a ‘monkey’ to shut up” was merely an impassioned appeal by an unknown London solicitor to a perfect stranger, on behalf of a ruined old lady litigant who only yearned for an ape to keep in confinement and make a pet of. For any woman in the throes of such woe as this, it was the refinement of torture to read of the Chinaman who believes implicitly in his wife's fidelity so long as he sneezes once in an hour, and whose wife persuades him always to wear a wet handkerchief inside his hat to keep his dear old shaved pate cool. Yet China was a cultured nation a thousand years before Britain

showed the slightest sign of becoming the delightful Nonconformist poultry-yard she is to-day. Socially, no less than matrimonially, Contango was a complete fizzle. A sable evening suit he simply loathed, but took a positive pride in the frayed and unravelled "County-court" shirt in which he "appeared" before tribunals, which reduced the claims of his more importunate creditors to crossing-sweepers' doles of a crown a month, and sometimes he got judicial "orders" set aside indefinitely. He did daily homage to his judgment-summons alpaca-jacket, and bowed down and worshipped his judge-in-chambers brown billycock; but all these things were as goads and undergarments of horsehair to Féo, who, now that the miserable backslider was under lock and key, could not decide whether in view of future peace of mind it was not more desirable to keep him in than to get him out.

They found him in his cell at Brixton, sprawling in a wooden chair in a Martin Harvey attitude, but not wholly broken in spirit—indeed, he had only recently passed some remarks about the administration of the civil law in England, of such a character that the head warden had resigned his long-coveted office simply in order to avoid future contiguity to Middlesex debtors in general. Though Féo tearfully addressed Contango by his pet name, he only stared at

her vacantly and bit his nails. Then his wandering eyes fell, for the first time ever, upon the old attorney, and the result of their brief inspection was clearly unfavourable. His first glance of scornful indifference quickly hardened into a deeply interested stare, and the debtor even raised himself upon his elbows and finally inclined his body forwards, the closer to continue his scrutiny. Tinge by tinge the passion rose in his face till at last he sprang from his seat. In a burst of fury he turned upon the octogenarian from the Temple.

"Strike me up a plum tree, this is too, *too* thick! You may have taken advantage of my temporary incarceration to supplant me in the affections of my wife, you hoary remnant of sin and senility!" he shrieked, "but I'll be eternally damned if you, or any other man, holds successional rights in my best umbrella! Come on!"

With that he literally showered blows—roughly estimated by a visiting J.P. who was slowly recovering from the jumps—at 300,000 in number, but probably less, since Mr Coke's prostrate body was recovered, minus the umbrella, within nine or ten minutes; whereas, even if the punches came at the rate of 250 a minute, which is quick work——

But I am not sure that I do not prefer to run downstairs to lunch, and leave the problem,

if they care to solve it, to the bright young mathematicians of the seventh page of the *Daily Mail*, who, given three figures and a bit of chalk, can be backed to figure the knocker off the front door at any time.

Au revoir, ma chère,

VIOLA.

EPISTLE XII

EATON SQUARE, *Friday, May 12th.*

DEAREST PATRICIA,—

The postmark on your cheery little note to hand this morning throws a lurid light on the cat-like sneak you executed out of Charbonell's last Friday afternoon, after positively insisting that I should drink a dish of tea with you. As I told you at the time, I once swore to a relative, since dead, never to touch tea until I wanted it; but I had no idea that you contemplated wolfing three chocolate eclairs and a buttered scone and proceeding direct to Paris, even though, as you aver, you acted upon a sudden impulse to write a Rita-like series of articles for *The Gentlewoman* entitled "What I saw in Montmartre." A graphic description from a capable pen of what you did *not* see in Montmartre would be far more likely, I think, to increase the circulation of any newspaper. I had meant asking you on which three nights of

this week you could make use of our box at the Opera, but as your letter is headed merely "Wednesday," which I didn't seem to think would find you in a big place like Paris, I simply couldn't—as the fair candidate for the chorus of the new musical-comedy remarked on observing that her mother had put out a pink flannelette set for her to go and have her voice "tried" in. Anyway, I hope that you may have an exciting and adventurous time in Lutetia, a desire which I express with increased confidence since reading in this morning's newspapers, that bands of impoverished but resourceful Parisians are earning a precarious livelihood by throwing young women, ostensibly of the unfortunate class, into the Seine, and then rescuing them under the eyes of the benevolent.

I have, by the way, something more than a fanciful and fantastic notion that Paris may hold me within the next forty-eight hours, for our household is at the moment as intolerable to me as was that of the ambitious young gentleman who, in defence of his alleged want of family pride, pleaded that in was expecting, too much of one whose father was in Dartmoor, whose sister was in Regent Street, and whose mother was going about London with a wen as big as a diving-bell. As usual, Mr Contango is at the bottom of the spasm. But while the brilliancy and variety of that man's errors throw a reflected

glory upon his inventive genius and effectually preclude the possibility of his turning over a new leaf without investing in an entirely fresh book, his repeated backslidings are surely undermining the nerves, and consuming the very molecules and corpuscles of Féo's delicate physical adjustment. • No sooner is one epoch of recidivation bottled up by a sickening course of vespertinal canoodling than another severe slump, calculated to cause the entire building to vibrate, is ripening in some other quarter, until it really seems that the only domain in which Mr Contango could be confidently relied upon to keep out of trouble, would be an iron-barred niche high on the face of the most inaccessible peak of Popocatapetl.

When I went to her boudoir this morning to execute a quick touch for the price of some long-coveted green tourmaline pendants, Féo was reclining on the sofa, like the gentleman who sat down "unbeknownst" on the box of fusees, face downwards, and sobbing her very heart out. A torn blue envelope, inscribed in the familiar hand of our hired Sherlock, which lay upon the floor, told me instantly that the dreadful Contango had once again been weighed in the balances and found several hundredweight against the purchaser; but with the "Festina lente" of the Onslows ever before me, I contented myself by inquiring the interesting nature of the poor

wretch's vapours—and that in the most frigidly cucumberish fashion.

It appeared that on a not very remote evening she was being driven across Piccadilly Circus towards the Strand, when a block in the traffic caused the carriage to pull up almost directly in front of the Criterion Bar. At first Féo scarcely noticed the stoppage, the pleasant tide of her thoughts running on the recent, self-instituted moral reformation of Mr Contango, he having begun, according to his own account, to make "great gobs of the wherewith" by following financial journalism in the City. Than this nothing in the world could be likelier, since he really has a most persuasive literary style and, indeed, once wrote a letter of condolence to the widow of a bookmaker (killed in a sort of paper-chase by a blow from a bottle) which was so convincing that no sooner had the anguished relict read it than she put off her mourning, took a couple of phenacetin tabloids, and went out to a music-hall. Mr Contango's further assurances that he had absolutely renounced the use of hot and rebellious liquors, Féo more readily believed, she told me, since she had only that very morning poured him out seven tumblers of cold water before rising. As the period of her detention in the middle of the Circus by the rozzer in the rubber overalls became unreasonably prolonged, however, she lowered the carriage window and—

did so just in time to behold a most sickening spectacle. The glazed doors of the American Bar were suddenly thrown open by an unseen force, and Mr Contango was projected violently into the road! So vigorous was the propelling power behind him, said Féo, that he cleared the pavement as if he had been dynamited horizontally, and he would have bitten the dust but that his nose seemed to be in the way. As he arose with bleeding proboscis and hurled at his projector a string of sunset adjectives, which it was quite impossible for her to hear in the presence of servants, Féo saw clearly that Mr Contango had vineleaves in his hair, so, sinking back upon the cushions of the carriage, she was borne to her destination in the collapsed condition so graphically described by Dr Harris Ruddock as "the engine with the fly-wheel gone."

Not until the following afternoon did Mr Contango return to Eaton Square, when (although Féo has since ascertained that he ate a soothing, if vulgar, supper of tripe and onions in a kitchen in Pinlicko) the explanation he gave of his damaged family feature was that he had been trying a bicycle in the street and got a flat wheel—fortunately just outside the hospital into which the bystanders carried him. With unusual wisdom Féo expressed no comment, but instituted the inquiries to which the torn blue envelope had

brought the sequel. Crystallised, it was as follows:

There is, so say Féo's sleuth-hounds, no art known to moderns (save that of the subdolous Somerset Street *passé* face-fakirs who remove crow's feet, beetling eyebrows, and double chips, and restore and preserve youthfulness in ten successive ninety-minute "treatments" at one-guinea-and-a-half per) which is netting more money for its artificers than the art of "telling the tale," and in a branch of this industry which he has made peculiarly his own, has Mr Contango been reaping the golden results erroneously attributed by Féo to honest literary labour. In the buffet-bars, the music-halls, and "other places where they sing" in the wide world of cheap flutter, Mr Contango (in whose family, Féo now remembers having been told by a palmist, poverty has predominated over honesty from pre-historic times) has been in the habit of encountering the young gentlemen best adapted to his purpose. Féo's inquiry-agents describe these individuals as "the juvenile jays of convivial commercialism," but I prefer to preserve an impartial lukewarmth in the matter. In their proper sphere they are, I feel convinced, quite genuine persons though of the unfortunate kind that cannot get away in the afternoon, and are therefore the more likely to be entrapped when dolled up and out for the evening. It is a lamentable but incontrovertible

solecism, I am told, that many young men who are highly moral—almost German-Reed—at heart, are inwardly never happier than when suspected of disreputable tendencies.

Entering any bar or public place where one of these odd creatures, attired in an evening suit of eccentric cut and showing a scarlet silk handkerchief protruding from the waistcoat, chances to be lounging, deeply cogitating whether the obviously interested onlookers take him for the latest turf plunger or the French Embassy, Mr Contango immediately gives an elaborate exhibition of surprise and delight.

“Why, my dear old lad!” cries he, rushing up and taking the poseur by both fists, “this is indeed red and yellow wine for me! To think that I haven’t set eyes on you since Lincoln, and last week was the Two Thousand! And *you*, above all others, who never by any chance missed a Newmarket? Too bad, too bad; we were a melancholy crowd without you; no little *mênus*, no cards; to bed with the chickens, and the Rooms at midnight as soundless as a Libyan desert! Now what prevented you: something fresh in petticoats, I’ll wager?”

Flattered and confused by all this, the simpleton hesitates. His sense of rectitude prompts some such reply as “You have the advantage of me,” or, alternatively, “I think

you are mistaken"—(see Mixitt's "Art of Polite Conversation." One shilling. At all book-stalls)—but his vanity forbids it. To be mistaken for anybody rather than plain Tom Copley is, in fact, the very keynote to the assumption of the funny evening kit, the ludicrous red hanky; that the conversation happens to be so much above his head is very regrettable, but still no fault of his—indeed he has not as yet uttered one single word. And if, after all, he sufficiently resembles this racing celebrity, this young blood so gifted and accomplished that his mere absence from a "First Spring" causes the whole of Newmarket to be plunged in melancholy, why should *he*, plain Tom Copley, be under the obligation of making, in front of a score of strangers—for an audience soon gathers—the humiliating admission that, far from being "dear old lad," he is not a turfite at all but a—well, private individual from the hindquarters of Oxford Street? So, seeing no great harm in winging a little, he replies, with absolute truth:

"No, it was nothing in petticoats,"—(quite probably he is in the "Ribbon and Lace," and not the "Underclothing" at all)—"but something quite different that detained me. But I must be going now."

"Lucky dog! lucky dog!" then cries Mr Contango. "For ever hammering on the anvil

of passion, and drinking only, as did your illustrious forebears, out of the satin shoes of their mistresses. But—er—I really *must* have *one* word with you before you go: you can guess what about, eh?”

“Indeed, I can’t.”

“Aye, there comes your patrician breeding again, lad! A noble nature, inherited from a long line of exalted sires, confers on you the privilege of forgetting your benefices to your friends! Mean to say you have forgotten the fiver which you generously pressed upon me as we came off the course at Lincoln?”

“Absolutely,” replies the youth, utterly out of his depth, but discerning no danger.

“Then let me try and recall the circumstances to your mind. I had had a dash on Merry Andrew for the last race—with what result you know: Ariosto chopped him at the start and was never headed. I was absolutely stranded for ready cash—positively without my railway fare on to Liverpool—when you—may heav’n bless you for your generous act—leapt into the breach. I have fortunately a blank cheque here——”

At this he would draw from a quilted-satin note case a green cheque form, and continue: “—and, for once, I may discharge my debt, though never my obligation. Meantime, old college-companion, pray condescend to take one parting drink with me—nay, be pleased to let *me*

pay: 't may seem like Lazarus entertaining Dives, but no matter. Barkeeper, two special liqueurs of the Imperial O.V.H., a large 'polly divided, and—the pen and the inkhorn, quick.”

By now, Cobley's entanglement is greater than his brain can compass. He has allowed his ineptitude to sink him to the level of a common swindler; yet the hard-shelled fact that the position is none of his seeking is being shouted through an unseen megaphone into his ear by an invisible Adversary of Souls. Were it not for the accursed, gaping mob, he would chance making a clean breast of it; but the truth will not bear all lights. At worst he must accept the draft and contrive to return it privately, later on.

“Here we are, dear lad,” cries Mr Contango, finishing the writing (and poor Cobley's reflections) and flourishing the cheque, “I have made it for a tenner because I find that I have just run out of silver, but if you will let me have a couple or three sovereigns just to carry me home, you can send your man round to Coutts's in the morning and slip me the remainder to-morrow night, or to-morrow twelvemonth, or—well, whenever I ask you for it. Aha! I'm about as fond of asking a fellow for money as you are, dear boy!”

It is then that Mr Cobley falls slap into the net and sinks just as deeply as he has cash

available—for I presume that even *you*, dear, are not so innocent in this “sordid and merciless age of industrialism” as to suppose that the cheque is of any more service to anybody than a stomach-ache. It is a very real lesson in the art of banking that Mr Cobley receives as the bank cashier returns him the stumer with the additional inscription of “N.E.”—“No Earthly” upon it. He sees at a glance precisely how much smaller his expenditure for the year will be since his little envelope for the month of May has been put through the wringer. And what if he subsequently lies in wait for Mr Contango with a view to readjustments, I think I hear you ask? Why, frankly, that would afford him about as much real joy as secretly pinching the cork leg of a lady stranger in a crowded omnibus. Mr Contango would instantly fetch him a crack across the mazzard with a bar towel, or some similarly offensive weapon, and accuse him aloud of every sin both in and out of the decalogue, not omitting the mysterious and only unforgivable one which is barely outlined in the Book of Revelations; he would, in short, do every objectionable thing within human knowledge—short of personally summoning the police. Estimating (Féo’s scouts conclude) the number of convivial commercialists put through the hoop at three per night, and averaging the sum contributed by each at fifty-seven-and-sixpence, Mr Contango has

been drawing an income of close upon three thousand a year from a source previously exploited only by cheap tobacconists and abandoned barmaids!

Is not it appalling? But perhaps you do not know that the first stone of the quite considerable pile left by the late Mr Sam Lewis was laid by youthful ignorance of banking methods—not Samuel's ignorance, dear; *he* knew all about banks, from his youth up, and quite frequently he took one. He was originally, you must know, a travelling jeweller, though upon a certain Monday morning when, instead of continuing to travel, he sent word to his firm that his liver was not acting—for all the world as though he expected that indispensable organ to go on at the Gaiety in tights and trunks, and a flaxen wig!—also that he was detained by an urgent matter of a lucrative character, likewise he was bidden to the funeral ceremonies of a very dear friend, not to mention his doctor's imperative orders about staying in the house with so serious a suppressed cold; many a conjecturing ear took a more forward inclination in the vain hope of learning something a little more definite. In reality, Samuel was occupied in raising twenty thousand spangles for a young gentleman who, after interviewing his pass-book, had come to the sickening conclusion that he had overdrawn his banking account to about that tune. The poor

boy had, in a lucid interval between drinks, sent for the little parchment wallet and compared its totals in order to see how much more money, if any, he had got to spend before he died, and from even the most careless analysis of the figures there existed between the right-hand columns and the left-hand columns a discrepancy of £19,776, 11s. 7d. The very natural conclusion to which these figures, as well as a colossal ache in the back of his head (By Christmas! how it did throb, throb, throb!) resigned him, was that he *must* have had an even better time than it had seemed—a distinct chunk of consolation in a way, but one that dug no subway for the man who had got to find “a hundred” somehow for a real little topweight, quite the very best that the dear old “Guv’nor” had ever put on any stage.

It was, however, when dear old Sam (as those who paid up as well as those who only renewed, alike addressed him) called in with the cash and spread the bonnie crisp notes of the Bank of England all over the blessed table that the sun took on new brightness. For a single glance at the inside of the pass-book disclosed to the genial Hebrew the fact that, far from being overdrawn, the high-mettled lad, whose magnificent ignorance of ledger-accounts only increased his nobility, simply didn’t know which side of the book was the other, and actually

had at that moment £19,776, 11s. 7d. standing to his credit.

"Anyhow," he remarked apologetically, after telling his man to fly down to the bank and get four more cheque-books immediately, "there must be thunder in the air, or something, for I'll take my oath I had less to drink last night than I did all the rest of last week put together."

Fancy you, dear kid, not knowing that, unlike the big drapery houses of London, which think nothing of lending an overstrung divinity of the footlights who may be expecting a bed-and-breakfast visit from an old Girton chum, a silk nightie; of sending it home to the *recherche* little flat at the top of the two-hundred-and-sixty-two stone steps, and of taking it back next morning after all the creases and crow's feet, bar its warehouse ones, have been pressed out by the great weight of some large literary work—Bunyan is about the heaviest in our language—and its pink ribbons have made their first rapid pass under a warm flat iron; the proprietors of les Grands Magasins do not cordially endorse the system of sending out their stock "on appro." Ample facilities for "appro rapide" are afforded on the premises to princesses of the blood and other noble damsels, who do not object to discrown themselves and slip into some lawn or batiste article of the *intime* toilette at 9 f. 50

in the shadow of a festoon of organdi muslins, or a bunch of shop-soiled ostrich stoles, but the girl who cannot make up her unsettled mind until she has got into the things in her own bedroom and, with her biggest picture hat on and a chrysanthemum in her hair, has marched up and down in front of her cheval glass singing "Won't you come home *now*, Bill Bailey?" is invariably discouraged. The hierophants of the Louvre, who in their pudacity request even married men who are not accompanied by their own wives to be good enough to conceal their identity as far as possible, claim that the "appro Anglais" system demoralises both the goods and the customers, but especially the goods.

And, somehow, this vagrant mention of married men and their wives reminds me to tell you that the impossible Invernairnes have quite recently made it up and sworn eternal friendship again. It came about all unrehearsed and unexpectedly—at least so she told some two or three hundred woman at her club, in strict confidence and on the distinct understanding that it went no further. They have lately been vegetating—in separate beds—in a sweetly rural spot called Hampstead, where the liver-pad and the footpad derive mutual benefit on Bank Holidays, and where all that one need do when one is hungry is to pull up a carrot and milk the cow. From a luxurious sleeping-

saloon on the first floor, Lady Invernairne could gaze across miles and miles of the western heath; though the eastern view from the palletted box-room on a higher floor, where his lordship lay like a case of suspended animation, was less imposing, and, indeed, consisted principally of whitewashed walls punctuated by a green door with a small ace-of-diamonds window and a latch string in it.

One night a brilliant thunderstorm swept o'er the Heath, the thunder rolling noisily down the very roofs of rainwashed slate, the heavens parting to take flashlight pictures of the fertile valleys of North Middlesex. A forked blue flame played in the sky above the crematorium at Golder's Hill, a ball of living fire dropped into the lake at Hendon, and—the craven Lady Invernairne crept from her bed to stand by her window and shake with terror, her eyes half closed and her firm, fair bosom—in adaged phrase they used to “lay the table” on her—turned temporarily to gooseflesh. It is at such times, when Nature scolds, that woman needs someone to comfort her and hold her hand till daylight happens or the storm abates. Never dreaming of consequences, Lady Invernairne weakly called down from the box-room the case of “suspended animation,” and manlike, he presumed——

But Féo, still a bunch of nerves, has just burst in to say that if a fiver is sufficient recom-

pense for two hours in the Turkish and three plain dishes for dinner, I can be on.

It is.

Toujours a toi,

VIOLA.

THE END

POPULAR SHILLING LIBRARY.

Pictura Covers.

THE LIGHT IN THE HAREM WINDOW. By JOAN CONQUEST.

DESERT LOVE. By JOAN CONQUEST.

LEONIE OF THE JUNGLE. By JOAN CONQUEST.

HAWK OF EGYPT. By JOAN CONQUEST.

WHAT THE BUTLER WINKED AT. By ERIC HORNE.

THE NIGHTSIDE OF LONDON. By ROBERT MACHEY.

MORE HUMOURS OF HISTORY. By ARTHUR MORELAND.

THIRTY YEARS AT BOW STREET POLICE COURT. By
WILLIAM T. EWENS.

MY CONFESSIONS. By MONTAGUE NOEL NEWTON.

NOTABLE FICTION (TRANSLATIONS).

Library Edition of the Stories of

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

Newly translated into English by MARJORIE LAURIE. Demy 8vo.
7s. 6d. net each.

BEL AMI.

A LIFE.

BOULE DE SUIF.

THE HOUSE OF MADAME
TELLIER.

MASTER PASSION.

NOTRE CŒUR.

MONT-ORIOL.

YVETTE AND OTHER
STORIES.

DAY AND NIGHT.

THE WORKS OF PIERRE LOTI (in English).

Colour Plates. Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d. net each.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

A TALE OF THE PYRENEES.

THE SAHARA.

INDIA.

EGYPT.

MOROCCO.

SIAM.

JERUSALEM.

JAPAN.

MADAME PRUNE.

A TALE OF BRITTANY.

THE ICELAND FISHER-
MAN.

THE MARRIAGE OF LOTI

*T. WERNER LAURIE LTD., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4.

THE WORKS OF SELMA LAGERLÖF (in English).

THE GIRL FROM THE MARSHCROFT. 15s. net.

THE HOLY CITY. 15s. net.

JERUSALEM. 15s. net.

THE TALE OF A MANOR. 7s. 6d. net.

QUEENS OF KUNGAHALLA. 5s. net.

MARBACKA (her autobiography). 10s. 6d. net.

CHINA.

STRANGE STORIES FROM A CHINESE STUDIO. Translated by HERBERT A. GILES, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge. 7s. 6d. net.

THE INCONSTANCY OF MADAM CHUANG. Translated by EDWARD B. HOWELL. Twelve Illustrations. 12s. 6d. net.

THE RESTITUTION OF THE BRIDE. Done into English by EDWARD BUTTS HOWELL. Illustrations. 10s. 6d. net.

FOR THE HOME LIBRARY.

COOKERY UP-TO-DATE. A Practical Handbook of What to Eat and How to Cook it. Revised to date. By MAY LITTLE (First-Class Diplômée, late Staff Teacher at the National Society's Training School of Cookery, London). Cloth. Picture Jacket. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

A YEAR'S DINNERS. 365 Seasonable Dinners, with Instructions for Cooking. A handy guide-book for worried housekeepers. By MAY LITTLE. Demy 8vo. 6s. net.

ETIQUETTE UP-TO-DATE. By CONSTANCE BURLEIGH. Cloth. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

HOW TO KEEP WELL. The Preservation of Health and Recognition of Disease. By A. F. CURRIER, M.D. 21s. net.

TEETH, DIET AND HEALTH. By H. THOMAS, D.M.D. 10s. 6d. net.

ORIGINS AND MEANINGS OF POPULAR PHRASES AND NAMES. By BASIL HARGRAVE. With a Supplementary Chapter of Phrases and Names used in the Great War. 7s. 6d. net.

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4. •

BRITISH INSECT LIFE: A Popular Introduction to Entomology. By EDWARD STEP, F.L.S. 220 Illustrations. 10s. 6d. net.

PRACTICAL AUCTION BRIDGE. By "BUCCANEER." A New Edition, with the latest rules. 6s. net.

THE MOTORIST'S NOTE-BOOK. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

"CAN YOU ANSWER THIS ONE?" 1,000 questions on General Knowledge with their answers. Cloth, 2s.; Paper, 1s. net.

CATHEDRALS, CHURCHES & CASTLES.

THE CATHEDRALS OF ENGLAND AND WALES. By T. FRANCIS BUMPUS. New One-Volume Edition. 52 half-tone Pictures. 25s. net.

THE CATHEDRALS OF FRANCE. By T. FRANCIS BUMPUS. 8 Illustrations in Colour and 70 Plates. 31s. 6d. net.

THE CATHEDRALS AND CHURCHES OF ITALY. By T. FRANCIS BUMPUS. 8 Illustrations in Colour and 71 Plates. 31s. 6d. net.

ANCIENT LONDON CHURCHES. By T. FRANCIS BUMPUS. 35 Illustrations. 18s. net.

SCOTTISH CASTLES AND KEEPS. By J. JEFFREY WADDELL, I.A., F.S.A. (Scot.). Illustrations in Colour and half-tone. 25s. net.

THE ENGLISH CASTLES. By EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE. Illustrations in Colour and many half-tone Plates. 21s. net.

OLD ENGLISH TOWNS. By E. M. LANG and WILLIAM ANDREWS. 31 Plates. 18s. net.

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY.

PIERRE LOTI: The Romance of a Great Writer. By EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE. Illustrated. 16s. net.

THE LIFE, WORK AND EVIL FATE OF GUY DE MAUPASSANT. By ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD. 48 Illustrations. 21s. net.

"MASTER" AND MEN: Pink 'Un Yesterdays. By J. B. BOOTH ("Costs"). Illustrated. 21s. net.

THE REAL "LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS" and other Women of Quality. By CHAS. A. DOLPH. Illustrated. 10s. 6d. net.

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4.

OLD TIMES: Forgotten Customs of the Past. By **WALTER CLIFFORD MELLER.** 10s. 6d. net.
IN THE WORLD. By **MAXIM GORKI.** 12s. 6d. net.
TRAGEDIES OF THE MEDICI. (Fifth Edition.) By **EDGCUMBE STALEY.** 12s. 6d. net.
THE COURTSHIPS OF CATHERINE THE GREAT. By **PHILIP W. SERGEANT.** 12s. 6d. net.
LOLA MONTEZ: An Adventure of the 'Forties. By **EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE.** 12s. 6d. net.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. By **JOHN G. NICOLAY.** 21s. net.

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE.

NOTES FROM MY SOUTH SEA LOG. By **LOUIS BECKE** 5s. net.
THE BOOK OF GALLANT VAGABONDS. By **HENRY BESTON.** Illustrated. 10s. 6d. net.
AN IMMIGRANT IN JAPAN. Life in a Native Village. By **THEODATE GEOFFREY.** 29 Illustrations. 12s. 6d. net.
CHINESE FANTASTICS. By **THOMAS STEEP.** Cloth. 10s. 6d. net.
PEKING. A Historical and Intimate Description of its Chief Places of Interest. By **JULIET M. BREDON.** Maps and Illustrations. 31s. 6d. net.
IN AND UNDER MEXICO. By **R. M. INGERSOLL.** Illustrations. 12s. 6d. net.
WORK AND PLAY IN THE ARGENTINE. By **CAPTAIN J. MACNIE.** Illustrated. 10s. 6d. net.
THE NIGHTSIDE OF JAPAN. By **T. FUJIMOTO.** 40 Illustrations. 12s. 6d. net.

FOR COLLECTORS.

OLD GLASS AND HOW TO COLLECT IT. By **J. SYDNEY LEWIS.** Third Edition. 75 Illustrations. 18s. net.
FIRST STEPS IN COLLECTING. By **G. M. VALLOIS.** 60 Illustrations. 21s. net.
ANTIQUES AND CURIOS IN OUR HOMES. By **G. M. VALLOIS.** 61 half-tone Illustrations. 18s. net.
OLD DERBY PORCELAIN AND ITS ARTIST WORKMEN. By **FRANK HURLBUTT.** 60 full-page Plates. 18s. net.
OLD SPODE: A Guide for Collectors. By **THOMAS G. CANNON.** 57 Plates. 18s. net.

T. WEINER LAURIE LTD., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4.

